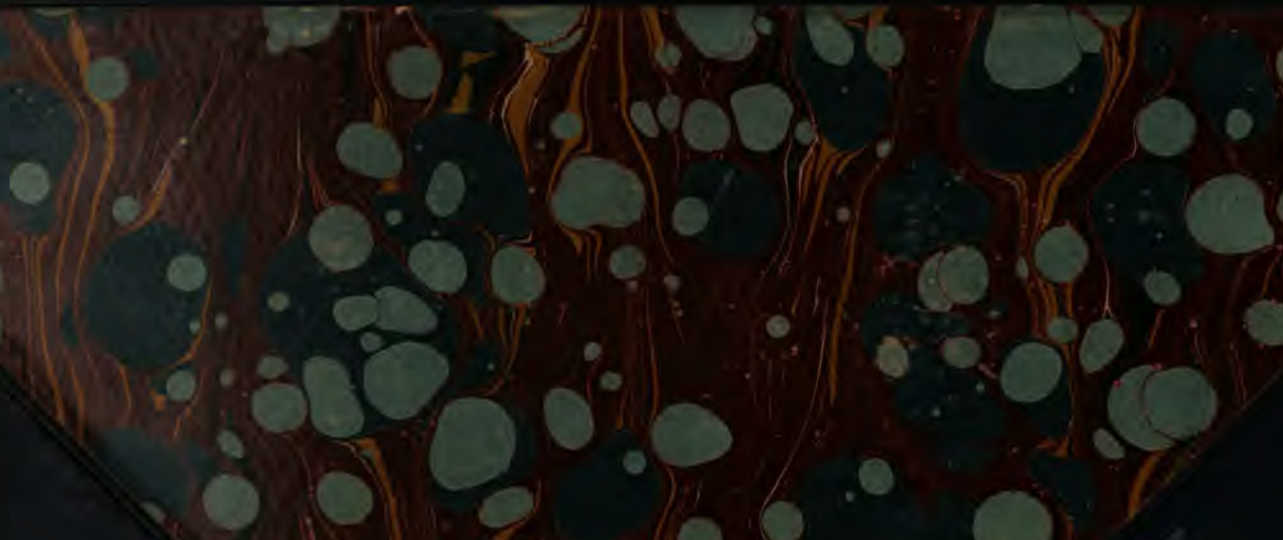

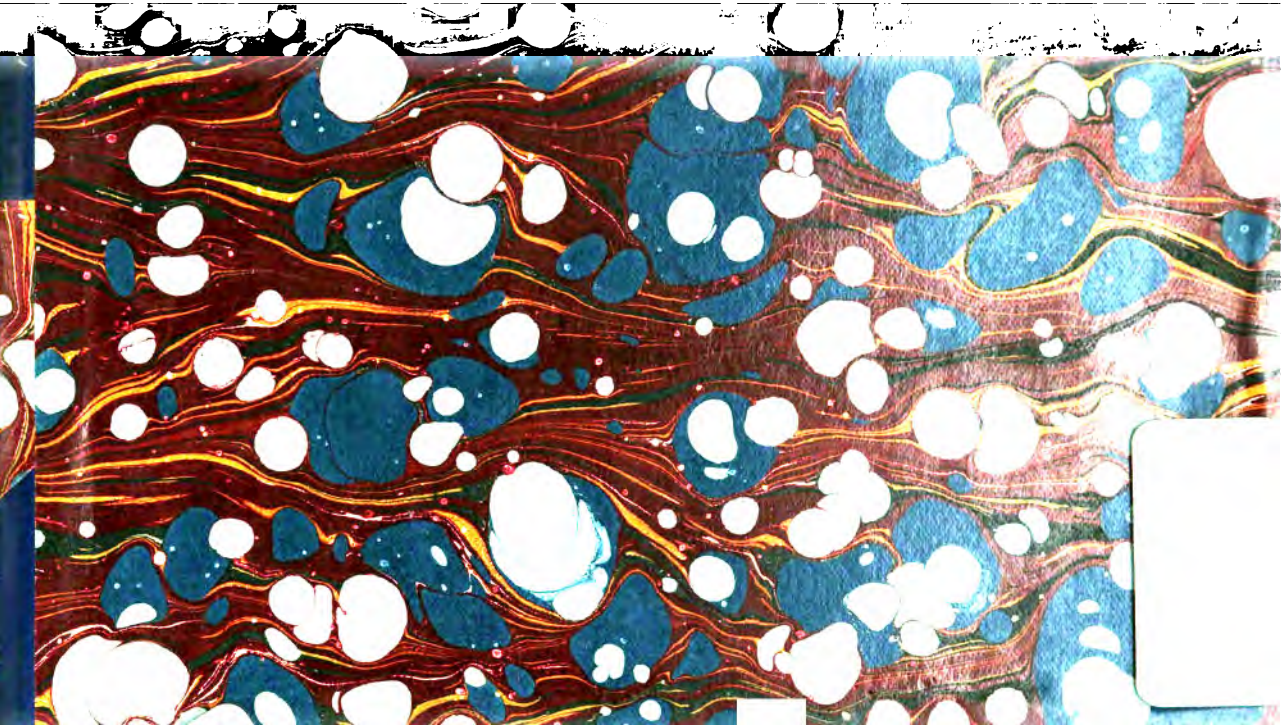

THE MONK.

A Romance.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

M. G. LEWIS, ESQ. M. P.

Somnia, terrores magicos, miracula, sagas,
Nocturnos lemures, portentaque. HOR.

Dreams, magic terrors, spells of mighty pow'r,
Witches, and ghosts who rove at midnight hour.

VOL. I.

Waterford:

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1796.

PREFACE.

IMITATION OF HORACE, EP. 20.—B. I.

METHINKS, oh, vain ill-judging book!
I see thee cast a wishful look,
Where reputations won and lost are
In famous row called *Paternoster*.
Incensed to find your precious olio
Buried in unexplor'd port-folio,
You scorn the prudent lock and key;
And pant, well bound and gilt, to see
Your volume in the window set
Of Stockdale, Hookham, or Debrett.

Go, then, and pass that dang'rous bourn
Whence never book can back return;
And when you find—condemn'd, despis'd,
Neglected, blam'd, and criticis'd—
Abuse from all who read you fall,
(If haply you be read at all),
Sorely will you your folly sigh at,
And wish for me, and home, and quiet.

Assuming now a conjuror's office, I
Thus on your future fortune prophesy:—
Soon as your novelty is o'er,
And you are young and new no more,
In some dark dirty corner thrown,
Mouldy with damps, with cobwebs strown,
Your leaves shall be the bookworm's prey;
Or sent to chandler-shop away,
And, doom'd to suffer public scandal,
Shall line the trunk, or wrap the candle!

But should you meet with approbation,
And some one find an inclination

To ask, by natural transition,
Respecting me and my condition;
That I am one, th' inquirer teach,
Nor very poor, nor very rich;
Of passions strong, of hasty nature,
Of graceless form and dwarfish stature;
By few approv'd, and few approving;
Extreme in hating and in loving;
Abhorring all whom I dislike,
Adoring who my fancy strike:
In forming judgments never long,
And for the most part judging wrong:
In friendship firm, but still believing
Others are treach'rous and deceiving;
And thinking, in the present era,
That friendship is a pure chimera:
More passionate no creature living,
Proud, obstinate, and unforgiving;
But yet, for those who kindness shew,
Ready through fire and smoke to go.

Again, should it be asked your page,
"Pray what may be the author's age?"

Your faults, no doubt, will make it clear,
I scarce have seen my twentieth year,
Which passed, kind reader, on my word,
While England's throne held George the Third.

Now then your venturous course pursue:
Go, my delight!—dear book, adieu!

M. G. L.

HAGUE.

TABLE OF THE POETRY.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE first idea of this Romance was suggested by the story of the *Santon Barsisa*, related in the Guardian. The *Bleeding Nun* is a tradition still credited in many parts of Germany; and I have been told, that the ruins of the castle of *Lauenstein*, which she is supposed to haunt, may yet be seen upon the borders of *Thuringia*. The *Water King*, from the third to the twelfth stanza, is the fragment of an original Danish ballad; and *Belerma and Durandarte* is translated from some stanzas to be found in a collection of old Spanish poetry, which contains also the popular song of *Gayferos* and *Melesindra*, mentioned in Don Quixote. I have now made a full avowal of all the plagiarisms of which I am aware myself; but I doubt not many more may be found, of which I am at present totally unconscious.

THE MONK.

CHAPTER I.

———Lord Angelo is precise;
Stands at a guard with envy; scarce confesses
That his blood flows, or that his appetite
Is more to bread than stone.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

SCARCELY had the abbey-bell tolled for five minutes, and already was the church of the Capuchins thronged with auditors. Do not encourage the idea that the crowd was assembled either from motives of piety or thirst of information: but very few were influenced by those reasons; and in a city where superstition reigns with such despotic sway as in Madrid, to seek for true devotion would be a fruitless attempt. The audience now assembled in the Capu-

chin church was collected by various causes, but all of them were foreign to the ostensible motive. The women came to shew themselves—the men to see the women: some were attracted by curiosity to hear an orator so celebrated; some came because they had no better means of employing their time till the play began; some from being assured that it would be impossible to find places in the church; and one half of Madrid was brought thither by expecting to meet the other half. The only persons truly anxious to hear the preacher were a few antiquated devotees, and half a dozen rival orators, determined to find fault with and ridicule the discourse. As to the remainder of the audience, the sermon might have been omitted altogether, certainly without their being disappointed, and very probably without their perceiving the omission.

Whatever was the occasion, it is at least certain, that the Capuchin church had never witnessed a more numerous assembly.

Every corner was filled, every seat was occupied. The very statues which ornamented the long aisles were pressed into the service. Boys suspended themselves upon the wings of cherubims; saint Francis and saint Mark bore each a spectator on his shoulders; and saint Agatha found herself under the necessity of carrying double. The consequence was, that, in spite of all their hurry and expedition, our two new comers, on entering the church, looked round in vain for places.

However, the old woman continued to move forwards. In vain were exclamations of displeasure vented against her from all sides; in vain was she addressed with —"I assure you, segnora, there are no places here."—"I beg, segnora, that you will not crowd me so intolerably."—"Segnora, you cannot pass this way. Bless me! how can people be so troublesome?".

The old woman was obstinate, and on she went. By dint of perseverance and two brawny arms, she made a passage

through the crowd, and managed to bustle herself into the very body of the church, at no great distance from the pulpit. Her companion had followed her with timidity, and in silence, profiting by the exertions of her conductress.

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed the old woman, in a tone of disappointment, while she threw a glance of inquiry round her—"Holy Virgin! what heat! what a crowd! I wonder what can be the meaning of all this. I believe we must return: there is no such thing as a seat to be had, and nobody seems kind enough to accommodate us with theirs."

This broad hint attracted the notice of two cavaliers, who occupied stools on the right hand, and were leaning their backs against the seventh column from the pulpit. Both were young, and richly habited. Hearing this appeal to their politeness pronounced in a female voice, they interrupted their conversation to look at the speaker. She had thrown up her veil

in order to take a clearer look round the cathedral: her hair was red, and she squinted. The cavaliers turned round, and renewed their conversation.

"By all means," replied the old woman's companion, "by all means, Leonella, let us return home immediately; the heat is excessive, and I am terrified at such a crowd."

These words were pronounced in a tone of unexampled sweetness. The cavaliers again broke off their discourse; but for this time they were not contented with looking up, but started involuntarily from their seats, and turned themselves towards the speaker.

The voice came from a female, the delicacy and elegance of whose figure inspired the youths with the most lively curiosity to view the face to which it belonged. This satisfaction was denied them. Her features were hidden by a thick veil; but struggling through the crowd had deranged it sufficiently to discover a neck,

which, for symmetry and beauty, might have vied with the Medicean Venus. It was of the most dazzling whiteness, and received additional charms from being shaded by the tresses of her long fair hair, which descended in ringlets to her waist. Her figure was rather below than above the middle size: it was light and airy as that of an Hamadryad. Her bosom was carefully veiled. Her dress was white; it was fastened by a blue sash, and just permitted to peep out from under it a little foot of the most delicate proportions. A chaplet of large grains hung upon her arm, and her face was covered with a veil of thick black gauze. Such was the female to whom the youngest of the cavaliers now offered his seat, while the other thought it necessary to pay the same attention to her companion.

The old lady, with many expressions of gratitude, but without much difficulty, accepted the offer, and seated herself: the young one followed her example, but made

no other compliment than a simple and graceful reverence. Don Lorenzo (such was the cavalier's name whose seat she had accepted) placed himself near her: but first he whispered a few words in his friend's ear, who immediately took the hint, and endeavoured to draw off the old woman's attention from her lovely charge.

"You are doubtless lately arrived at Madrid?" said Lorenzo to his fair neighbour; "it is impossible that such charms should have long remained unobserved; and had not this been your first public appearance, the envy of the women, and adoration of the men, would have rendered you already sufficiently remarkable."

He paused, in expectation of an answer. As his speech did not absolutely require one, the lady did not open her lips. After a few moments he resumed his discourse.

"Am I wrong in supposing you to be a stranger to Madrid?"

The lady hesitated; and at last, in so

low a voice as to be scarcely intelligible, she made shift to answer—"No, segnor."

"Do you intend making a stay of any length?"

"Yes, segnor."

"I should esteem myself fortunate, were it in my power to contribute to making your abode agreeable: I am well known at Madrid, and my family has some interest at court. If I can be of any service, you cannot honour or oblige me more than by permitting me to be of use to you.—Surely," said he to himself, "she cannot answer that by a monosyllable; now she must say something to me."

Lorenzo was deceived, for the lady answered only by a bow.

By this time he had discovered that his neighbour was not very conversible; but whether her silence proceeded from pride, discretion, timidity, or idiotism, he was still unable to decide.

After a pause of some minutes—"It is

certainly from your being a stranger," said he, "and as yet unacquainted with our customs, that you continue to wear your veil. Permit me to remove it."

At the same time he advanced his hand towards the gauze, the lady raised hers to prevent him.

"I never unveil in public, segnor."

"And where is the harm, I pray you?" interrupted her companion, somewhat sharply; "do not you see that the other ladies have all laid their veils aside—to do honour, no doubt, to the holy place in which we are? I have taken off mine already; and surely, if I expose my features to general observation, you have no cause to put yourself in such a wonderful alarm. Blessed Maria! here is a fuss and a bustle about a chit's face! Come, come, child, uncover it; I warrant you that nobody will run away with it from you."

"Dear aunt, it is not the custom in Murcia."

"Murcia, indeed! Holy saint Barbara!

what does that signify? You are always putting me in mind of that villanous province. If it is the custom in Madrid, that is all that we ought to mind; and therefore I desire you to take off your veil immediately. Obey me this moment, Antonia, for you know that I cannot bear contradiction."

Her niece was silent, but made no farther opposition to don Lorenzo's efforts, who, armed with the aunt's sanction, hastened to remove the gauze. What a seraph's head presented itself to his admiration! Yet it was rather bewitching than beautiful; it was not so lovely from regularity of features, as from sweetness and sensibility of countenance. The several parts of her face considered separately, many of them were far from handsome; but, when examined together, the whole was adorable. Her skin, though fair, was not entirely without freckles; her eyes were not very large, nor their lashes particularly long; but then her lips were of the most

rosy freshness; her fair and undulating hair, confined by a simple ribband, poured itself below her waist in a profusion of ringlets; her neck was full and beautiful in the extreme; her hand and arm were formed with the most perfect symmetry; her mild blue eyes seemed a heaven of sweetness, and the crystal in which they moved sparkled with all the brilliance of diamonds. She appeared to be scarcely fifteen; an arch smile, playing round her mouth, declared her to be possessed of liveliness, which excess of timidity at present repressed. She looked round her with a bashful glance; and whenever her eyes accidentally met Lorenzo's, she dropped them hastily upon her rosary; her cheek was immediately suffused with blushes, and she began to tell her beads, though her manner evidently shewed that she knew not what she was about.

Lorenzo gazed upon her with mingled surprise and admiration; but the aunt

thought it necessary to apologize for Antonia's *mauvaise honte.*

"'Tis a young creature," said she, "who is totally ignorant of the world. She has been brought up in an old castle in Murcia, with no other society than her mother's, who, God help her! has no more sense, good soul! than is necessary to carry her soup to her mouth; yet she is my own sister, both by father and mother."

"And has so little sense?" said don Christoval, with feigned astonishment: "how very extraordinary!"

"Very true, segnor; is it not strange? however, such is the fact; and yet, only to see the luck of some people! A young nobleman, of the very first quality, took it into his head that Elvira had some pretensions to beauty—As to pretensions, in truth she had always enough of *them;* but as to beauty—if I had only taken half the pains to set myself off which she did—But this is neither here nor there. As I was

saying, segnor, a young nobleman fell in love with her, and married her unknown to his father. Their union remained a secret near three years; but at last it came to the ears of the old marquis, who, as you may well suppose, was not much pleased with the intelligence. Away he posted in all haste to Cordova, determined to seize Elvira, and send her away to some place or other, where she would never be heard of more. Holy saint Paul! how he stormed, on finding that she had escaped him, had joined her husband, and that they had embarked together for the Indies! He swore at us all, as if the evil spirit had possessed him; he threw my father into prison—as honest a pains-taking shoemaker as any in Cordova; and when he went away, he had the cruelty to take from us my sister's little boy, then scarcely two years old; and whom, in the abruptness of her flight, she had been obliged to leave behind her. I suppose that the poor little wretch met with bitter bad treat-

ment from him, for in a few months after we received intelligence of his death."

"Why, this was a most terrible old fellow, segnora!"

"Oh, shocking! and a man so totally devoid of taste! Why, would you believe it, segnor, when I attempted to pacify him, he cursed me for a witch, and wished that, to punish the count, my sister might become as ugly as myself?—Ugly, indeed! I like him for that."

"Ridiculous!" cried don Christoval. "Doubtless the count would have thought himself fortunate, had he been permitted to exchange the one sister for the other."

"Oh, Christ! segnor, you are really too polite. However, I am heartily glad that the condé was of a different way of thinking. A mighty pretty piece of business, to be sure, Elvira has made of it! After broiling and stewing in the Indies for thirteen long years, her husband dies, and she returns to Spain, without a house to hide her head, or money to procure her one!

This Antonia was then but an infant, and her only remaining child. She found that her father-in-law had married again, that he was irreconcileable to the condé, and that his second wife had produced him a son, who is reported to be a very fine young man. The old marquis refused to see my sister or her child; but sent her word that, on condition of never hearing any more of her, he would assign her a small pension, and she might live in an old castle which he possessed in Murcia. This had been the favourite habitation of his eldest son; but since his flight from Spain, the old marquis could not bear the place, but let it fall to ruin and confusion. My sister accepted the proposal; she retired to Murcia, and has remained there till within the last month."

"And what brings her now to Madrid?" inquired don Lorenzo, whom admiration of the young Antonia compelled to take a lively interest in the talkative old woman's narration.

"Alas, segnor, her father-in-law being lately dead, the steward of his Murcian estates has refused to pay her pension any longer. With the design of supplicating his son to renew it, she is now come to Madrid: but I doubt that she might have saved herself the trouble; you young noblemen have always enough to do with your money, and are not very often disposed to throw it away upon old women. I advised my sister to send Antonia with her petition; but she would not hear of such a thing. She is so obstinate! Well, she will find herself the worse for not following my counsels: the girl has a good pretty face, and possibly might have done much."

"Ah, segnora," interrupted don Christoval, counterfeiting a passionate air, "if a pretty face will do the business, why has not your sister recourse to you?"

"Oh, Jesus! My lord, I swear you quite overpower me with your gallantry! But I promise you that I am too well

aware of the danger of such expeditions, to trust myself in a young nobleman's power. No, no; I have as yet preserved my reputation without blemish or reproach, and I always knew how to keep the men at a proper distance."

"Of that, segnora, I have not the least doubt. But permit me to ask you, have you then any aversion to matrimony?"

"That is a home question. I cannot but confess, that if an amiable cavalier was to present himself——"

Here she intended to throw a tender and significant look upon don Christoval; but, as she unluckily happened to squint most abominably, the glance fell directly upon his companion. Lorenzo took the compliment to himself, and answered it by a profound bow.

"May I inquire," said he, "the name of the marquis?"

"The marquis de las Cisternas."

"I know him intimately well. He is not at present in Madrid, but is expected

here daily. He is one of the best of men; and if the lovely Antonia will permit me to be her advocate with him, I doubt not my being able to make a favourable report of her cause."

Antonia raised her blue eyes, and silently thanked him for the offer by a smile of inexpressible sweetness. Leonella's satisfaction was much more loud and audible: indeed, as her niece was generally silent in her company, she thought it incumbent upon her to talk enough for both: this she managed without difficulty, for she very seldom found herself deficient in words.

"Oh, segnor," she cried, "you will lay our whole family under the most signal obligations! I accept your offer with all possible gratitude, and return you a thousand thanks for the generosity of your proposal. Antonia, why do you not speak, child? While the cavalier says all sorts of civil things to you, you sit like a statue, and never utter a syllable of thanks, either bad, good, or indifferent!——"

"My dear aunt, I am very sensible that ——"

"Fie, niece!—How often have I told you, that you never should interrupt a person who is speaking! When did you ever know me do such a thing? Are these your Murcian manners? Mercy on me! I shall never be able to make this girl any thing like a person of good breeding.—But pray, segnor," she continued, addressing herself to don Christoval, "inform me why such a crowd is assembled to-day in this cathedral?"

"Can you possibly be ignorant, that Ambrosio, abbot of this monastery, pronounces a sermon in this church every Thursday? All Madrid rings with his praises. As yet he has preached but thrice; but all who have heard him are so delighted with his eloquence, that it is as difficult to obtain a place at church as at the first representation of a new comedy. His fame certainly must have reached your ears?"

"Alas, segnor, till yesterday I never had the good fortune to see Madrid; and at Cordova we are so little informed of what is passing in the rest of the world, that the name of Ambrosio has never been mentioned in its precincts."

"You will find it in every one's mouth at Madrid. He seems to have fascinated the inhabitants; and, not having attended his sermons myself, I am astonished at the enthusiasm which he has excited. The adoration paid him both by young and old, by man and woman, is unexampled. The grandees load him with presents; their wives refuse to have any other confessor; and he is known through all the city by the name of *the man of holiness*."

"Undoubtedly, segnor, he is of noble origin?"

"That point still remains undecided. The late superior of the Capuchins found him, while yet an infant, at the abbey-door: all attempts to discover who had left him there were vain, and the child himself

could give no account of his parents. He was educated in the monastery, where he has remained ever since. He early shewed a strong inclination for study and retirement; and as soon as he was of a proper age, he pronounced his vows. No one has ever appeared to claim him, or clear up the mystery which conceals his birth; and the monks, who find their account in the favour which is shewn to their establishment from respect to him, have not hesitated to publish, that he is a present to them from the Virgin. In truth, the singular austerity of his life gives some countenance to the report. He is now thirty years old, every hour of which period has been passed in study, total seclusion from the world, and mortification of the flesh. Till these last three weeks, when he was chosen superior of the society to which he belongs, he had never been on the outside of the abbey-walls. Even now he never quits them except on Thursdays, when he delivers a discourse in this cathedral, which

all Madrid assembles to hear. His knowledge is said to be the most profound, his eloquence the most persuasive. In the whole course of his life, he has never been known to transgress a single rule of his order; the smallest stain is not to be discovered upon his character; and he is reported to be so strict an observer of chastity, that he knows not in what consists the difference of man and woman: the common people, therefore, esteem him to be a saint."

"Does that make a saint?" inquired Antonia. "Bless me! then am I one."

"Holy St. Barbara!" exclaimed Leonella, "what a question! Fie, child, fie! these are not fit subjects for young women to handle. You should not seem to remember that there is such a thing as a man in the world, and you ought to imagine every body to be of the same sex with yourself. I should like to see you give people to understand, that you know that a man has no breasts, and no hips, and no——"

Luckily for Antonia's ignorance, which

her aunt's lecture would soon have dispelled, an universal murmur through the church announced the preacher's arrival. Donna Leonella rose from her seat to take a better view of him, and Antonia followed her example.

He was a man of noble port and commanding presence. His stature was lofty, and his features uncommonly handsome. His nose was aquiline, his eyes large, black, and sparkling, and his dark brows almost joined together. His complexion was of a deep but clear brown: study and watching had entirely deprived his cheek of colour. Tranquillity reigned upon his smooth unwrinkled forehead; and content, expressed upon every feature, seemed to announce the man equally unacquainted with cares and crimes. He bowed himself with humility to the audience. Still there was a certain severity in his look and manner that inspired universal awe, and few could sustain the glance of his eye, at once fiery and penetrating. Such was Ambrosio, abbot of the Capu-

chins, and surnamed *the man of holiness.*

Antonia, while she gazed upon him eagerly, felt a pleasure fluttering in her bosom, which till then had been unknown to her, and for which she in vain endeavoured to account. She waited with impatience till the sermon should begin: and when at length the friar spoke, the sound of his voice seemed to penetrate into her very soul. Though no other of the spectators felt such violent sensations as did the young Antonia, yet every one listened with interest and emotion. They who were insensible to religion's merits were still enchanted with Ambrosio's oratory. All found their attention irresistibly attracted while he spoke, and the most profound silence reigned through the crowded aisles. Even Lorenzo could not resist the charm; he forgot that Antonia was seated near him, and listened to the preacher with undivided attention.

In language nervous, clear, and simple, the monk expatiated on the beauties of re-

ligion. He explained some abstruse parts of the sacred writings in a style that carried with it universal conviction. His voice, at once distinct and deep, was fraught with all the terrors of the tempest, while he inveighed against the vices of humanity, and described the punishments reserved for them in a future state. Every hearer looked back upon his past offences, and trembled: the thunder seemed to roll, whose bolt was destined to crush him, and the abyss of eternal destruction to open before his feet! But when Ambrosio, changing his theme, spoke of the excellence of an unsullied conscience, of the glorious prospect which eternity presented to the soul untainted with reproach, and of the recompence which awaited it in the regions of everlasting glory, his auditors felt their scattered spirits insensibly return: they threw themselves with confidence upon the mercy of their Judge; they hung with delight upon the consoling words of the preacher; and, while his full voice swelled

into melody, they were transported to those happy regions which he painted to their imaginations in colours so brilliant and glowing.

The discourse was of considerable length; yet, when it concluded, the audience grieved that it had not lasted longer. Though the monk had ceased to speak, enthusiastic silence still prevailed through the church. At length the charm gradually dissolving, the general admiration was expressed in audible terms. As Ambrosio descended from the pulpit, his auditors crowded round him, loaded him with blessings, threw themselves at his feet, and kissed the hem of his garment. He passed on slowly, with his hands crossed devoutly upon his bosom, to the door opening into the abbey-chapel, at which his monks waited to receive him. He ascended the steps, and then turning towards his followers, addressed to them a few words of gratitude and exhortation. While he spoke, his rosary, composed of large grains of amber, fell from his

hand, and dropped among the surrounding multitude. It was seized eagerly, and immediately divided amongst the spectators. Whoever became possessor of a bead preserved it as a sacred relique; and had it been the chaplet of thrice-blessed St. Francis himself, it could not have been disputed with greater vivacity. The abbot, smiling at their eagerness, pronounced his benediction and quitted the church, while humility dwelt upon every feature. Dwelt she also in his heart?

Antonia's eyes followed him with anxiety: as the door closed after him, it seemed to her as if she had lost some one essential to her happiness; a tear stole in silence down her cheek.—"He is separated from the world!" said she to herself: "perhaps I shall never see him more!"

As she wiped away the tear, Lorenzo observed her action.

"Are you satisfied with our orator?" said he; "or do you think that Madrid overrates his talents?"

Antonia's heart was so filled with admiration for the monk, that she eagerly seized the opportunity of speaking of him: besides, as she now no longer considered Lorenzo as an absolute stranger, she was less embarrassed by her excessive timidity.

"Oh, he far exceeds all my expectations," answered she: "till this moment I had no idea of the powers of eloquence; but when he spoke, his voice inspired me with such interest, such esteem, I might almost say such affection for him, that I am myself astonished at the acuteness of my feelings."

Lorenzo smiled at the strength of her expressions.

"You are young, and just entering into life," said he; "your heart, new to the world, and full of warmth and sensibility, receives its first impressions with eagerness. Artless yourself, you suspect not others of deceit; and viewing the world through the medium of your own truth and innocence, you fancy all who surround

you to deserve your confidence and esteem. What pity that these gay visions must soon be dissipated!—what pity that you must soon discover the baseness of mankind, and guard against your fellow-creatures as against your foes!"

"Alas, segnor," replied Antonia, "the misfortunes of my parents have already placed before me but too many sad examples of the perfidy of the world! Yet surely, in the present instance, the warmth of sympathy cannot have deceived me."

"In the present instance, I allow that it has not. Ambrosio's character is perfectly without reproach; and a man who has passed the whole of his life within the walls of a convent cannot have found the opportunity to be guilty, even were he possessed of the inclination. But now, when obliged by the duties of his situation, he must enter occasionally into the world, and be thrown into the way of temptation, it is now that it behoves him

to shew the brilliance of his virtue. The trial is dangerous: he is just at that period of life when the passions are most vigorous, unbridled, and despotic; his established reputation will mark him out to seduction as an illustrious victim; novelty will give additional charms to the allurements of pleasure; and even the talents with which nature has endowed him will contribute to his ruin, by facilitating the means of obtaining his object. Very few would return victorious from a contest so severe."

"Ah! surely Ambrosio will be one of those few."

"Of that I have myself no doubt; by all accounts he is an exception to mankind in general, and envy would seek in vain for a blot upon his character."

"Segnor, you delight me by this assurance! It encourages me to indulge my prepossession in his favour; and you know not with what pain I should have repress-

ed the sentiment. Ah, dearest aunt, entreat my mother to choose him for our confessor."

"I entreat her!" replied Leonella; "I promise you that I shall do no such thing. I do not like this same Ambrosio in the least; he has a look of severity about him that made me tremble from head to foot. Were he my confessor, I should never have the courage to avow one half of my peccadilloes; and then I should be in a rare condition! I never saw such a stern-looking mortal, and hope that I never shall see such another. His description of the devil, God bless us! almost terrified me out of my wits; and when he spoke about sinners, he seemed as if he was ready to eat them."

"You are right, segnora," answered don Christoval: "too great severity is said to be Ambrosio's only fault. Exempted himself from human feelings, he is not sufficiently indulgent to those of others; and though strictly just and disinterested in his

decisions, his government of the monks has already shewn some proofs of his inflexibility. But the crowd is nearly dissipated: will you permit us to attend you home?"

"Oh Christ! segnor," exclaimed Leonella, affecting to blush, "I would not suffer such a thing for the universe! If I came home attended by so gallant a cavalier, my sister is so scrupulous that she would read me an hour's lecture, and I should never hear the last of it. Besides, I rather wish you not to make your proposals just at present."

"My proposals! I assure you, segnora——"

"Oh, segnor, I believe that your assurances of impatience are all very true; but really I must desire a little respite. It would not be quite so delicate in me to accept your hand at first sight."

"Accept my hand! As I hope to live and breathe——"

"Oh, dear segnor, press me no further:

if you love me, I shall consider your obedience as a proof of your affection; you shall hear from me to-morrow, and so farewell. But pray, cavaliers, may I not inquire your names?"

"My friend's," replied Lorenzo, "is the condé d'Ossorio, and mine Lorenzo de Medina."

"'Tis sufficient—Well, don Lorenzo, I shall acquaint my sister with your obliging offer, and let you know the result with all expedition. Where may I send to you?"

"I am always to be found at the Medina palace."

"You may depend upon hearing from me. Farewell, cavaliers. Segnor condé, let me entreat you to moderate the excessive ardour of your passion. However, to prove that I am not displeased with you, and prevent your abandoning yourself to despair, receive this mark of my affection, and sometimes bestow a thought upon the absent Leonella."

As she said this she extended a lean and

wrinkled hand, which her supposed admirer kissed with such sorry grace, and constraint so evident, that Lorenzo with difficulty repressed his inclination to laugh. Leonella then hastened to quit the church: the lovely Antonia followed her in silence; but when she reached the porch, she turned involuntarily, and cast back her eyes towards Lorenzo. He bowed to her, as bidding her farewell; she returned the compliment, and hastily withdrew.

"So, Lorenzo," said don Christoval, as soon as they were alone, "you have procured me an agreeable intrigue! To favour your designs upon Antonia, I obligingly make a few civil speeches which mean nothing to the aunt, and at the end of an hour I find myself upon the brink of matrimony! How will you reward me, for having suffered so grievously for your sake? what can repay me, for having kissed the leathern paw of that confounded old witch? Diavolo! She has left such a scent upon my lips, that I shall smell of garlic for

this month to come. As I pass along the Prado, I shall be taken for a walking omelet, or some large onion running to seed."

"I confess, my poor count," replied Lorenzo, "that your service has been attended with danger; yet am I so far from supposing it to be past all endurance, that I shall probably solicit you to carry on your amour still further."

"From that petition, I conclude that the little Antonia has made some impression upon you?"

"I cannot express to you how much I am charmed with her. Since my father's death, my uncle, the duke de Medina, has signified to me his wishes to see me married; I have till now eluded his hints, and refused to understand them; but what I have seen this evening——"

"Well, what have you seen this evening?—Why surely, don Lorenzo, you cannot be mad enough to think of making a wife out of this granddaughter of 'as ho-

nest a pains-taking shoemaker as any in Cordova?"

"You forget that she is also the granddaughter of the late marquis de las Cisternas. But without disputing about birth and titles, I must assure you tha I never beheld a woman so interesting as Antonia."

"Very possibly; but you cannot mean to marry her?"

"Why not, my dear condé? I shall have wealth enough for both of us; and you know that my uncle thinks liberally upon the subject. From what I have seen of Raymond de las Cisternas, I am certain that he will readily acknowledge Antonia for his niece. Her birth, therefore, will be no objection to my offering her my hand. I should be a villain, could I think of her on any other terms than marriage; and in truth she seems possessed of every quality requisite to make me happy in a wife: young, lovely, gentle, sensible——"

"Sensible!—Why, she said nothing but yes and no."

"She did not say much more, I must confess; but then she always said yes or no in the right place."

"Did she so? oh, your most obedient! that is using a right lover's argument; and I dare dispute no longer with so profound a casuist. Suppose we adjourn to the comedy?"

"It is out of my power: I only arrived last night at Madrid, and have not yet had an opportunity of seeing my sister. You know that her convent is in this street, and I was going thither when the crowd which I saw thronging into this church excited my curiosity to know what was the matter. I shall now pursue my first intention, and probably pass the evening with my sister at the parlour-grate."

"Your sister in a convent, say you?—Oh, very true; I had forgotten. And how does donna Agnes? I am amazed, don Lorenzo, how you could possibly think of immuring so charming a girl within the walls of a cloister!"

"I think of it, don Christoval! how can you suspect me of such barbarity? You are conscious that she took the veil by her own desire, and that particular circumstances made her wish for a seclusion from the world. I used every means in my power to induce her to change her resolution; the endeavour was fruitless, and I lost a sister."

"The luckier fellow you: I think, Lorenzo, you were a considerable gainer by that loss; if I remember right, donna Agnes had a portion of ten thousand pistoles, half of which reverted to your lordship. By St. Jago! I wish that I had fifty sisters in the same predicament. I should consent to losing them every soul without much heart-burning."

"How, condé!" said Lorenzo, in an angry voice; "do you suppose me base enough to have influenced my sister's retirement? do you suppose that the despicable wish to make myself master of her fortune could——"

"Admirable! Courage, don Lorenzo! Now the man is all in a blaze. God grant that Antonia may soften that fiery temper, or we shall certainly cut each other's throat before the month is over! However, to prevent such a tragical catastrophe for the present, I shall make a retreat, and leave you master of the field. Farewell, my knight of mount Ætna! Moderate that inflammable disposition, and remember that, whenever it is necessary to make love to yonder harridan, you may reckon upon my services." He said, and darted out of the cathedral.

"How wild-brained!" said Lorenzo. "With so excellent a heart, what pity that he possesses so little solidity of judgment!"

The night was now fast advancing. The lamps were not yet lighted; the faint beams of the rising moon scarcely could pierce through the gothic obscurity of the church. Lorenzo found himself unable to quit the spot. The void left in his bosom

by Antonia's absence, and his sister's sacrifice, which don Christoval had just recalled to his imagination, created that melancholy of mind which accorded but too well with the religious gloom surrounding him. He was still leaning against the seventh column from the pulpit. A soft and cooling air breathed along the solitary aisles; the moonbeams darting into the church through painted windows, tinged the fretted roofs and massy pillars with a thousand various shades of light and colours. Universal silence prevailed around, only interrupted by the occasional closing of doors in the adjoining abbey.

The calm of the hour and solitude of the place contributed to nourish Lorenzo's disposition to melancholy. He threw himself upon a seat which stood near him, and abandoned himself to the delusions of his fancy. He thought of his union with Antonia; he thought of the obstacles which might oppose his wishes, and a thousand changing visions floated before his fancy—

sad, 'tis true, but not unpleasing. Sleep insensibly stole over him; and the tranquil solemnity of his mind, when awake, for a while continued to influence his slumbers.

He still fancied himself to be in the church of the Capuchins; but it was no longer dark and solitary. Multitudes of silver lamps shed splendour from the vaulted roofs; accompanied by the captivating chaunt of distant choristers, the organ's melody swelled through the church: the altar seemed decorated as for some distinguished feast; it was surrounded by a brilliant company, and near it stood Antonia arrayed in bridal white, and blushing with all the charms of virgin modesty.

Half hoping, half fearing, Lorenzo gazed upon the scene before him. Suddenly the door leading to the abbey unclosed; and he saw, attended by a long train of monks, the preacher advance, to whom he had just listened with so much admiration. He drew near Antonia.

"And where is the bridegroom?" said the imaginary friar.

Antonia seemed to look round the church with anxiety. Involuntarily the youth advanced a few steps from his concealment. She saw him; the blush of pleasure glowed upon her cheek; with a graceful motion of her hand she beckoned to him to advance. He disobeyed not the command; he flew towards her, and threw himself at her feet.

She retreated for a moment; then gazing upon him with unutterable delight—"Yes," she exclaimed, "my bridegroom! my destined bridegroom!" She said, and hastened to throw herself into his arms; but before he had time to receive her, an unknown rushed between them: his form was gigantic, his complexion was swarthy, his eyes fierce and terrible; his mouth breathed out volumes of fire, and on his forehead was written, in legible characters, "Pride! Lust! Inhumanity!"

Antonia shrieked. The monster clasped her in his arms, and, springing with her upon the altar, tortured her with his odious caresses. She endeavoured in vain to escape from his embrace. Lorenzo flew to her succour; but ere he had time to reach her, a loud burst of thunder was heard. Instantly the cathedral seemed crumbling into pieces; the monks betook themselves to flight, shrieking fearfully; the lamps were extinguished, the altar sunk down, and in its place appeared an abyss, vomiting forth clouds of flame. Uttering a loud and terrible cry, the monster plunged into the gulf, and in his fall attempted to drag Antonia with him. He strove in vain. Animated by supernatural powers, she disengaged herself from his embraces; but her white robe was left in his possession. Instantly a wing of brilliant splendour spread itself from either of Antonia's arms. She darted upwards, and, while ascending, cried to Lorenzo—"Friend! we shall meet above!"

At the same moment, the roof of the cathedral opened; harmonious voices pealed along the vaults, and the glory into which Antonia was received was composed of rays of such dazzling brightness that Lorenzo was unable to sustain the gaze. His sight failed, and he sunk upon the ground.

When he awoke, he found himself extended upon the pavement of the church: it was illuminated, and the chaunt of hymns sounded from a distance. For a while Lorenzo could not persuade himself that what he had just witnessed had been a dream, so strong an impression had it made upon his fancy. A little recollection convinced him of its fallacy: the lamps had been lighted during his sleep; and the music which he heard was occasioned by the monks, who were celebrating their vespers in the abbey-chapel.

Lorenzo rose, and prepared to bend his steps towards his sister's convent, his mind fully occupied by the singularity of his dream. He already drew near the porch,

when his attention was attracted by perceiving a shadow moving upon the opposite wall. He looked curiously round, and soon descried a man wrapped up in his cloak, who seemed carefully examining whether his actions were observed. Very few people are exempt from the influence of curiosity. The unknown seemed anxious to conceal his business in the cathedral; and it was this very circumstance which made Lorenzo wish to discover what he was about.

Our hero was conscious that he had no right to pry into the secrets of this unknown cavalier.

"I will go," said Lorenzo—and Lorenzo staid where he was.

The shadow thrown by the column effectually concealed him from the stranger, who continued to advance with caution. At length he drew a letter from beneath his cloak, and hastily placed it beneath a colossal statue of saint Francis. Then retiring with precipitation, he concealed

himself in a part of the church at a considerable distance from that in which the image stood.

"So," said Lorenzo to himself, "this is only some foolish love affair. I believe I may as well be gone, for I can do no good in it."

In truth, till that moment, it never came into his head that he could do any good in it; but he thought it necessary to make some little excuse to himself for having indulged his curiosity.

He now made a second attempt to retire from the church. For this time, he gained the porch without meeting with any impediment; but it was destined that he should pay it another visit that night. As he descended the steps leading into the street, a cavalier rushed against him with such violence, that both were nearly overturned by the concussion. Lorenzo put his hand to his sword.

"How now, segnor!" said he; "what mean you by this rudeness?"

"Ha! is it you, Medina?" replied the new comer, whom Lorenzo, by his voice, now recognized for don Christoval. "You are the luckiest fellow in the universe, not to have left the church before my return. In, in, my dear lad! they will be here immediately!"

"Who will be here?"

"The old hen and all her pretty little chickens. In, I say, and then you shall know the whole history."

Lorenzo followed him into the cathedral, and they concealed themselves behind the statue of saint Francis.

"And now," said our hero, "may I take the liberty of asking what is the meaning of all this haste and rapture?"

"Oh, Lorenzo, we shall see such a glorious sight! The prioress of saint Clare and her whole train of nuns are coming hither. You are to know, that the pious father Ambrosio (the Lord reward him for it!) will upon no account move out of his own precincts. It being

absolutely necessary for every fashionable convent to have him for its confessor, the nuns are in consequence obliged to visit him at the abbey; since, when the mountain will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet must needs go to the mountain. Now the prioress of saint Clare, the better to escape the gaze of such impure eyes as belong to yourself and your humble servant, thinks proper to bring her holy flock to confession in the dusk: she is to be admitted into the abbey-chapel by yon private door. The porteress of saint Clare, who is a worthy old soul, and a particular friend of mine, has just assured me of their being here in a few moments. There is news for you, you rogue! We shall see some of the prettiest faces in Madrid!"

"In truth, Christoval, we shall do no such thing. The nuns are always veiled."

"No, no, I know better. On entering a place of worship, they ever take off their veils, from respect to the saint to whom 'tis dedicated. But hark! they are coming!"

Silence! silence! observe, and be convinced."

"Good!" said Lorenzo to himself; "I may possibly discover to whom the vows are addressed of this mysterious stranger."

Scarcely had don Christoval ceased to speak, when the domina of saint Clare appeared, followed by a long procession of nuns. Each upon entering the church took off her veil. The prioress crossed her hands upon her bosom, and made a profound reverence as she passed the statue of saint Francis, the patron of this cathedral. The nuns followed her example, and several moved onwards without having satisfied Lorenzo's curiosity. He almost began to despair of seeing the mystery cleared up, when in paying her respect to saint Francis, one of the nuns happened to drop her rosary. As she stooped to pick it up, the light flashed full in her face. At the same moment, she dexterously removed the letter from beneath

the image, placed it in her bosom, and hastened to resume her rank in the procession.

"Ha!" said Christoval in a low voice, "here we have some little intrigue, no doubt."

"Agnes, by Heaven!" cried Lorenzo.

"What, your sister? Diavolo!—Then somebody, I suppose, will have to pay for our peeping."

"And shall pay for it without delay," replied the incensed brother.

The pious procession had now entered the abbey; the door was already closed upon it. The unknown immediately quitted his concealment, and hastened to leave the church: ere he could effect his intention, he descried Medina stationed in his passage. The stranger hastily retreated, and drew his hat over his eyes.

"Attempt not to fly me!" exclaimed Lorenzo; "I will know who you are, and what were the contents of that letter."

"Of that letter!" repeated the un-

known: "and by what title do you ask the question?"

"By a title of which I am now ashamed; but it becomes not you to question me: either reply circumstantially to my demands, or answer me with your sword."

"The latter method will be the shortest," rejoined the other, drawing his rapier. "Come on, segnor Bravo! I am ready."

Burning with rage, Lorenzo hastened to the attack: the antagonists had already exchanged several passes, before Christoval, who at that moment had more sense than either of them, could throw himself between their weapons.

"Hold! hold, Medina!" he exclaimed: "remember the consequences of shedding blood on consecrated ground!"

The stranger immediately dropped his sword.—"Medina!" he cried. "Great God! is it possible? Lorenzo, have you quite forgotten Raymond de las Cisternas?"

Lorenzo's astonishment increased with

every succeeding moment. Raymond advanced towards him; but with a look of suspicion he drew back his hand, which the other was preparing to take.

"You here, marquis! What is the meaning of all this? You engaged in a clandestine correspondence with my sister, whose affections——"

"Have ever been, and still are, mine. But this is no fit place for an explanation: accompany me to my hotel, and you shall know every thing. Who is that with you?"

"One whom I believe you to have seen before," replied don Christoval, "though probably not at church."

"The condé d'Ossorio?"

"Exactly so, marquis."

"I have no objection to entrusting you with my secret, for I am sure that I may depend upon your silence."

"Then your opinion of me is better than my own, and therefore I must beg leave to decline your confidence. Do you

go your own way, and I shall go mine. Marquis, where are you to be found?"

"As usual, at the hotel de las Cisternas; but remember that I am incognito, and that, if you wish to see me, you must ask for Alphonso d'Alvarada."

Good! good! Farewell, cavaliers!" said don Christoval, and instantly departed.

"You, marquis," said Lorenzo, in the accent of surprise, "you Alphonso d'Alvarada!"

"Even so, Lorenzo: but unless you have already heard my story from your sister, I have much to relate that will astonish you. Follow me, therefore, to my hotel without delay."

At this moment the porter of the Capuchins entered the cathedral to lock up the doors for the night. The two noblemen instantly withdrew, and hastened with all speed to the palace de las Cisternas.

"Well, Antonia," said the aunt, as soon

as she had quitted the church, "what think you of our gallants? Don Lorenzo really seems a very obliging good sort of young man: he paid you some attention, and nobody knows what may not come of it. But as to don Christoval, I protest to you he is the very phœnix of politeness; so gallant! so well bred! so sensible, and so pathetic! Well, if ever man can prevail upon me to break my vow never to marry, it will be that don Christoval. You see, niece, that every thing turns out exactly as I told you: the very moment that I produced myself in Madrid, I knew that I should be surrounded by admirers. When I took off my veil, did you see, Antonia, what an effect the action had upon the condé? and when I presented him my hand, did you observe the air of passion with which he kissed it? If ever I witnessed real love, I then saw it impressed upon don Christoval's countenance!"

Now Antonia had observed the air with which don Christoval had kissed this same

hand; but as she drew conclusions from it somewhat different from her aunt's, she was wise enough to hold her tongue. As this is the only instance known of a woman's ever having done so, it was judged worthy to be recorded here.

The old lady continued her discourse to Antonia in the same strain, till they gained the street in which was their lodging. Here a crowd collected before their door permitted them not to approach it; and placing themselves on the opposite side of the street, they endeavoured to make out what had drawn all these people together. After some minutes the crowd formed itself into a circle; and now Antonia perceived in the midst of it a woman of extraordinary height, who whirled herself repeatedly round and round, using all sorts of extravagant gestures. Her dress was composed of shreds of various coloured silks and linens, fantastically arranged, yet not entirely without taste. Her head was covered with a kind of tur-

ban, ornamented with vine-leaves and wild flowers. She seemed much sun-burnt, and her complexion was of a deep olive: her eyes looked fiery and strange; and in her hand she bore a long black rod, with which she at intervals traced a variety of singular figures upon the ground, round about which she danced in all the eccentric attitudes of folly and delirium. Suddenly she broke off her dance, whirled herself round thrice with rapidity, and after a moment's pause, she sung the following ballad:—

THE GIPSY'S SONG.

Come, cross my hand! my art surpasses
All that did ever mortal know:
Come, maidens, come! my magic glasses
Your future husband's form can shew:

For 'tis to me the power is given,
Unclos'd, the book of Fate to see;
To read the fix'd resolves of Heaven,
And dive into futurity.

I guide the pale moon's silver waggon;
The winds in magic bonds I hold;
I charm to sleep the crimson dragon,
Who loves to watch o'er buried gold.

Fenc'd round with spells, unhurt I venture
Their sabbath strange where witches keep;
Fearless the sorcerer's circle enter,
And woundless tread on snakes asleep.

Lo! here are charms of mighty power!
This makes secure a husband's truth;
And this, composed at midnight hour,
Will force to love the coldest youth.

If any maid too much has granted,
Her loss this philtre will repair;
This blooms a cheek where red is wanted,
And this will make a brown girl fair.

Then silent hear, while I discover
What I in Fortune's mirror view;
And each, when many a year is over,
Shall own the gipsy's sayings true."

"Dear aunt," said Antonia, when the stranger had finished, "is she not mad?"

"Mad! Not she, child; she is only

wicked. She is a gipsy, a sort of vagabond, whose sole occupation is to run about the country telling lies, and pilfering from those who come by their money honestly. Out upon such vermin! If I were king of Spain, every one of them should be burnt alive, who was found in my dominions after the next three weeks."

These words were pronounced so audibly, that they reached the gipsy's ears. She immediately pierced through the crowd, and made towards the ladies. She saluted them thrice in the eastern fashion, and then addressed herself to Antonia:

THE GIPSY.

"Lady, gentle lady! know
I your future fate can shew;
Give your hand, and do not fear;
Lady, gentle lady, hear!"

"Dearest aunt," said Antonia, "indulge me this once! let me have my fortune told me!"

"Nonsense, child! she will tell you nothing but falsehoods."

"No matter; let me at least hear what she has to say. Do, my dear aunt, oblige me, I beseech you!"

"Well, well, Antonia, since you are so bent upon the thing—Here, good woman, you shall see the hands of both of us. There is money for you, and now let me hear my fortune."

As she said this, she drew off her glove, and presented her hand, The gipsy looked at it for a moment, and then made this reply:—

THE GIPSY.

"Your fortune!—you are now so old,
Good dame, that 'tis already told:
Yet, for your money, in a trice
I will repay you in advice.
Astonish'd at your childish vanity,
Your friends all tax you with insanity,
And grieve to see you use your art
To catch some youthful lover's heart.

Believe me, dame, when all is done,
Your age will still be fifty-one;
And men will rarely take a hint
Of love from two grey eyes that squint.
Take then my counsels: lay aside
Your paint and patches, lust and pride,
And on the poor those sums bestow,
Which now are spent on useless shew.
Think on your Maker, not a suitor;
Think on your past faults, not on future;
And think Time's scythe will quickly mow
The few red hairs which deck your brow."

The audience rang with laughter during the gipsy's address; and—"fifty-one—squinting eyes—red hair—paint and patches," &c. were bandied from mouth to mouth. Leonella was almost choked with passion, and loaded her malicious adviser with the bitterest reproaches. The swarthy prophetess for some time listened to her with a contemptuous smile. At length she made her a short answer, and then turned to Antonia:

THE GIPSY.

"Peace, lady! what I said was true.
And now, my lovely maid! to you:—
Give me your hand, and let me see
Your future doom, and Heaven's decree!"

In imitation of Leonella, Antonia drew off her glove, and presented her white hand to the gipsy, who, having gazed upon it for some time, with a mingled expression of pity and astonishment, pronounced her oracle in the following words:

THE GIPSY.

"Jesus! what a palm is there!
Chaste and gentle, young and fair,
Perfect mind and form possessing,
You would be some good man's blessing;
But, alas! this line discovers
That destruction o'er you hovers:
Lustful man and crafty devil,
Will combine to work your evil;
And from earth by sorrows driven,
Soon your soul must speed to heaven.

Yet your sufferings to delay,
Well remember what I say:
When you one more virtuous see
Than belongs to man to be—
One, whose self no crimes assailing,
Pities not his neighbour's failing,
Call the gipsy's words to mind:
Though he seem so good and kind,
Fair exteriors oft will hide,
Hearts that swell with lust and pride.
"Lovely maid, with tears I leave you:
Let not my prediction grieve you;
Rather, with submission bending,
Calmly wait distress impending,
And expect eternal bliss
In a better world than this."

Having said this, the gipsy again whirled herself round thrice, and then hastened out of the street with frantic gesture. The crowd followed her; and Elvira's door being now unembarrassed, Leonella entered the house, out of humour with the gipsy, with her niece, and with the people; in short, with every body but

herself and her charming cavalier. The gipsy's predictions had also considerably affected Antonia; but the impression soon wore off, and in a few hours she had forgotten the adventure, as totally as had it never taken place.

CHAPTER II.

Fòrse sé tu gustassi una sòl volta
La millésima parte délle giòje,
Ché gusta un còr amato riamando,
Diresti ripentita sospirando,
Perduto è tutto il tempo
Ché in amar non si spènde. TASSO.

Hadst thou but tasted once the thousandth part
Of joys, which bless the lov'd and loving heart,
Your words repentant and your sighs would prove
Lost is the time which is not pass'd in love.

THE monks having attended their abbot to the door of his cell, he dismissed them with an air of conscious superiority, in which humility's semblance combated with the reality of pride.

He was no sooner alone, than he gave

free loose to the indulgence of his vanity. When he remembered the enthusiasm which his discourse had excited, his heart swelled with rapture, and his imagination presented him with splendid visions of aggrandizement. He looked round him with exultation; and pride told him loudly, that he was superior to the rest of his fellow-creatures.

"Who," thought he, "who but myself has passed the ordeal of youth, yet sees no single stain upon his conscience? Who else has subdued the violence of strong passions, and an impetuous temperament, and submitted, even from the dawn of life, to voluntary retirement? I seek for such a man in vain. I see no one but myself possessed of such resolution. Religion cannot boast Ambrosio's equal! How powerful an effect did my discourse produce upon its auditors! How they crowded round me! How they loaded me with benedictions, and pronounced me the sole uncorrupted pillar of the church!

What then now is left for me to do? Nothing, but to watch as carefully over the conduct of my brethren as I have hitherto watched over my own. Yet hold! May I not be tempted from those paths, which, till now, I have pursued without one moment's wandering? Am I not a man, whose nature is frail and prone to error? I must now abandon the solitude of my retreat: the fairest and noblest dames of Madrid continually present themselves at the abbey, and will use no other confessor. I must accustom my eyes to objects of temptation, and expose myself to the seduction of luxury and desire. Should I meet, in that world which I am constrained to enter, some lovely female—lovely as yon Madona——!"

As he said this, he fixed his eyes upon a picture of the Virgin, which was suspended opposite to him: this for two years had been the object of his increasing wonder and adoration. He paused, and gazed upon it with delight.

"What beauty in that countenance!" he continued, after a silence of some minutes; "how graceful is the turn of that head! what sweetness, yet what majesty in her divine eyes! how softly her cheek reclines upon her hand! Can the rose vie with the blush of that cheek? can the lily rival the whiteness of that hand?—Oh! if such a creature existed, and existed but for me! were I permitted to twine round my fingers those golden ringlets, and press with my lips the treasures of that snowy bosom!—Gracious God! should I then resist the temptation?—should I not barter, for a single embrace, the reward of my sufferings for thirty years?—should I not abandon—Fool that I am! whither do I suffer my admiration of this picture to hurry me? Away, impure ideas! Let me remember, that woman is for ever lost to me. Never was mortal formed so perfect as this picture. But even did such exist, the trial might be too mighty for a common virtue; but Ambrosio's is proof

against temptation. Temptation, did I say?—to me it would be none: what charms me, when ideal, and considered as a superior being, would disgust me, become woman, and tainted with all the failings of mortality. It is not the woman's beauty that fills me with such enthusiasm: it is the painter's skill that I admire—it is the divinity that I adore. Are not the passions dead in my bosom? have I not freed myself from the frailty of mankind? Fear not, Ambrosio! take confidence in the strength of your virtue; enter boldly into the world, to whose failings you are superior; reflect that you are now exempted from humanity's defects, and defy all the arts of the spirits of darkness: they shall know you for what you are!"

Here his reverie was interrupted by three soft knocks at the door of his cell: —with difficulty did the abbot awake from his delirium:—the knocking was repeated.

"Who is there?" said Ambrosio, at length.

"It is only Rosario," replied a gentle voice.

"Enter, enter, my son!"

The door was immediately opened, and Rosario appeared with a small basket in his hand.

Rosario was a young novice belonging to the monastery, who in three months intended to make his profession. A sort of mystery enveloped this youth, which rendered him at once an object of interest and curiosity. His hatred of society, his profound melancholy, his rigid observance of the duties of his order, and his voluntary seclusion from the world, at his age so unusual, attracted the notice of the whole fraternity. He seemed fearful of being recognized, and no one had ever seen his face. His head was continually muffled up in his cowl; yet such of his features as accident discovered appeared the most beautiful and noble. Rosario

was the only name by which he was known in the monastery. No one knew from whence he came; and, when questioned on the subject, he preserved a profound silence. A stranger, whose rich habit and magnificent equipage declared him to be of distinguished rank, had engaged the monks to receive a novice, and had deposited the necessary sums. The next day he returned with Rosario, and from that time no more had been heard of him.

The youth had carefully avoided the company of the monks: he answered their civilities with sweetness, but reserve, and evidently shewed that his inclination led him to solitude. To this general rule the superior was the only exception. To him he looked up with a respect approaching idolatry: he sought his company with the most attentive assiduity, and eagerly seized every means to ingratiate himself in his favour. In the abbot's society his heart seemed to be at ease, and an air of gaiety pervaded his whole manners and dis-

course. Ambrosio, on his side, did not feel less attracted towards the youth: with him alone did he lay aside his habitual severity; when he spoke to him, he insensibly assumed a tone milder than was usual to him; and no voice sounded so sweet to him as did Rosario's. He repaid the youth's attentions by instructing him in various sciences. The novice received his lessons with docility; Ambrosio was every day more charmed with the vivacity of his genius, the simplicity of his manners, and the rectitude of his heart: in short, he loved him with all the affection of a father. He could not help sometimes indulging a desire secretly to see the face of his pupil; but his rule of self-denial extended even to curiosity, and prevented him from communicating his wishes to the youth.

"Pardon my intrusion, father," said Rosario, while he placed his basket upon the table; "I come to you a suppliant.—Hearing that a dear friend is dangerously

ill, I entreat your prayers for his recovery. If supplications can prevail upon Heaven to spare him, surely yours must be efficacious."

"Whatever depends upon me, my son, you know that you may command. What is your friend's name?"

"Vincentio della Ronda."

"'Tis sufficient; I will not forget him in my prayers: and may our thrice-blessed St. Francis deign to listen to my intercession!—What have you in your basket, Rosario?"

"A few of those flowers, reverend father, which I have observed to be most acceptable to you. Will you permit my arranging them in your chamber?"

"Your attentions charm me, my son."

While Rosario dispersed the contents of his basket in small vases, placed for that purpose in various parts of the room, the abbot thus continued the conversation:—

"I saw you not in the church this evening, Rosario."

"Yet I was present, father: I am too grateful for your protection to lose an opportunity of witnessing your triumph."

"Alas, Rosario, I have but little cause to triumph: the saint spoke by my mouth; to him belongs all the merit. It seems, then, you were contented with my discourse?"

"Contented, say you! Oh, you surpassed yourself!—Never did I hear such eloquence—save once!"

Hear the novice heaved an involuntary sigh.

"When was that once?" demanded the abbot.

"When you preached upon the sudden indisposition of our late superior."

"I remember it: that is more than two years ago. And were you present? I knew you not at that time, Rosario."

"'Tis true, father; and would to God I had expired ere I beheld that day! What sufferings, what sorrows should I have escaped!"

"Sufferings at your age, Rosario?"

"Ay, father—sufferings, which, if known to you, would equally raise your anger and compassion—sufferings, which form at once the torment and pleasure of my existence. Yet in this retreat my bosom would feel tranquil, were it not for the tortures of apprehension. Oh God! oh God! how cruel is a life of fear!—Father, I have given up all—I have abandoned the world and its delights for ever! nothing now remains, nothing now has charms for me, but your friendship, but your affection! If I lose that, father—oh, if I lose that, tremble at the effects of my despair!"

"You apprehend the loss of my friendship? How has my conduct justified this fear? Know me better, Rosario, and think me worthy of your confidence. What are your sufferings? Reveal them to me, and believe, that if 'tis in my power to relieve them——"

"Ah! 'tis in no one's power but yours.

Yet I must not let you know them. You would hate me for my avowal; you would drive me from your presence with scorn and ignominy."

"My son, I conjure you—I entreat you——"

"For pity's sake, inquire no further! I must not—I dare not——Hark! the bell rings for vespers! Father, your benediction, and I leave you."

As he said this he threw himself upon his knees, and received the blessing which he demanded. Then pressing the abbot's hand to his lips, he started from the ground, and hastily quitted the apartment. Soon after Ambrosio descended to vespers, which were celebrated in a small chapel belonging to the abbey, filled with surprise at the singularity of the youth's behaviour.

Vespers being over, the monks retired to their respective cells. The abbot alone remained in the chapel, to receive the nuns of St. Clare. He had not been long

seated in the confessional chair, before the prioress made her appearance. Each of the nuns was heard in her turn, while the others waited with the domina in the adjoining vestry. Ambrosio listened to the confessions with attention, made many exhortations, enjoined penance proportioned to each offence, and for some time every thing went on as usual: till, at last, one of the nuns, conspicuous from the nobleness of her air and elegance of her figure, carelessly permitted a letter to fall from her bosom. She was retiring, unconscious of her loss.

Ambrosio supposed it to have been written by some one of her relations, and picked it up, intending to restore it to her. —"Stay, daughter," said he; "you have let fall——"

At this moment, the paper being already open, his eye involuntarily read the first words. He started back with surprise. The nun had turned round on hearing his voice: she perceived her letter in his

hand, and, uttering a shriek of terror, flew hastily to regain it.

"Hold!" said the friar, in a tone of severity: "daughter, I must read this letter!"

"Then I am lost!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands together wildly.

All colour instantly faded from her face; she trembled with agitation, and was obliged to fold her arms round a pillar of the chapel to save herself from sinking upon the floor. In the meanwhile, the abbot read the following lines:—

"All is ready for your escape, my dearest Agnes. At twelve to-morrow night I shall expect to find you at the garden-door: I have obtained the key, and a few hours will suffice to place you in a secure asylum. Let no mistaken scruples induce you to reject the certain means of preserving yourself and the in-

nocent creature whom you nourish in your bosom. Remember that you had promised to be mine, long ere you engaged yourself to the church; that your situation will soon be evident to the prying eyes of your companions; and that flight is the only means of avoiding the effects of their malevolent resentment. Farewell, my Agnes! my dear and destined wife! Fail not to be at the garden-door at twelve."

As soon as he had finished, Ambrosio bent an eye stern and angry upon the imprudent nun.

"This letter must to the prioress," said he, and passed her.

His words sounded like thunder to her ears: she awoke from her torpidity only to be sensible of the dangers of her situation. She followed him hastily, and detained him by his garment.

"Stay! oh, stay!" she cried, in the ac-

cents of despair, while she threw herself at the friar's feet, and bathed them with her tears. "Father, compassionate my youth! —look with indulgence on a woman's weakness, and deign to conceal my frailty! The remainder of my life shall be employed in expiating this single fault, and your lenity will bring back a soul to heaven!"

"Amazing confidence! What! shall St. Clare's convent become the retreat of prostitutes? Shall I suffer the church of Christ to cherish in its bosom debauchery and shame? Unworthy wretch! such lenity would make me your accomplice: —mercy would here be criminal. You have abandoned yourself to a seducer's lust; you have defiled the sacred habit by your impurity; and still dare you think yourself deserving my compassion? Hence! nor detain me longer.—Where is the lady prioress?" he added, raising his voice.

"Hold, father! hold! Hear me but for

one moment! Tax me not with impurity, nor think that I have erred from the warmth of temperament. Long before I took the veil, Raymond was master of my heart: he inspired me with the purest, the most irreproachable passion, and was on the point of becoming my lawful husband. An horrible adventure, and the treachery of a relation, separated us from each other. I believed him for ever lost to me, and threw myself into a convent from motives of despair. Accident again united us; I could not refuse myself the melancholy pleasure of mingling my tears with his. We met nightly in the gardens of St. Clare, and in an unguarded moment I violated my vows of chastity. I shall soon become a mother.—Reverend Ambrosio, take compassion on me! take compassion on the innocent being whose existence is attached to mine! If you discover my imprudence to the domina, both of us are lost. The punishment which the laws of St. Clare assign to unfortu-

nates like myself is most severe and cruel. Worthy, worthy father! let not your own untainted conscience render you unfeeling towards those less able to withstand temptation! Let not mercy be the only virtue of which your heart is unsusceptible! Pity me, most reverend! Restore my letter, nor doom me to inevitable destruction!"

"Your boldness confounds me. Shall *I* conceal your crime?—*I*, whom you have deceived by your feigned confession?—No, daughter, no! I will render you a more essential service; I will rescue you from perdition, in spite of yourself. Penance and mortification shall expiate your offence, and severity force you back to the paths of holiness.—What, ho! Mother St. Agatha!"

"Father! by all that is sacred—by all that is most dear to you, I supplicate, I entreat——"

"Release me! I will not hear you.—

Where is the domina? Mother St. Agatha, where are you?"

The door of the vestry opened, and the prioress entered the chapel, followed by her nuns.

"Cruel! cruel!" exclaimed Agnes, relinquishing her hold.

Wild and desperate, she threw herself upon the ground, beating her bosom, and rending her veil, in all the delirium of despair. The nuns gazed with astonishment upon the scene before them. The friar now presented the fatal paper to the prioress, informed her of the manner in which he had found it, and added, that it was her business to decide what penance the delinquent merited.

While she perused the letter, the domina's countenance grew inflamed with passion. What! such a crime committed in her convent, and made known to Ambrosio, to the idol of Madrid, to the man whom she was most anxious to impress

with the opinion of the strictness and regularity of her house! Words were inadequate to express her fury: she was silent, and darted upon the prostrate nun looks of menace and malignity.

"Away with her to the convent!" said she, at length, to some of her attendants.

Two of the oldest nuns now approaching Agnes, raised her forcibly from the ground, and prepared to conduct her from the chapel.

"What!" she exclaimed, suddenly, shaking off their hold with distracted gestures, "is all hope then lost? already do you drag me to punishment?—Where are you, Raymond? Oh, save me! save me!" Then casting upon the abbot a frantic look—"Hear me," she continued, "man of a hard heart! Hear me, proud, stern, and cruel! You could have saved me—you could have restored me to happiness and virtue—but would not: you are the destroyer of my soul; you are my murderer, and on you all the curse of my

death and my unborn infant's! Insolent in your yet-unshaken virtue, you disdained the prayers of a penitent! But God will shew mercy, though you shew none. And where is the merit of your boasted virtue? —what temptations have you vanquished? Coward! you have fled from it, not opposed seduction! But the day of trial will arrive. Oh then! when you yield to impetuous passions—when you feel that man is weak, and born to err—when, shuddering, you look back upon your crimes, and solicit, with terror, the mercy of your God—oh! in that fearful moment, think upon me!—think upon your cruelty!—think upon Agnes, and despair of pardon!"

As she uttered these last words, her strength was exhausted, and she sunk inanimate upon the bosom of a nun who stood near her. She was immediately conveyed from the chapel, and her companions followed her.

Ambrosio had not listened to her re-

proaches without emotion: a secret pang at his heart made him feel that he had treated this unfortunate with too great severity; he therefore detained the prioress, and ventured to pronounce some words in favour of the delinquent.

"The violence of her despair," said he, "proves that, at least, vice is not become familiar to her. Perhaps, by treating her with somewhat less rigour than is generally practised, and mitigating, in some degree, the accustomed penance——"

"Mitigate it, father!" interrupted the lady prioress: "not I, believe me. The laws of our order are strict and severe: they have fallen into disuse of late—but the crime of Agnes shews me the necessity of their revival. I go to signify my intention to the convent; and Agnes shall be the first to feel the rigour of those laws, which shall be obeyed to the very letter. Father, farewell."

Thus saying, she hastened out of the chapel.

"I have done my duty!" said Ambrosio to himself.

Still did he not feel perfectly satisfied by this reflection. To dissipate the unpleasant ideas which this scene had excited in him, upon quitting the chapel he descended into the abbey-garden. In all Madrid there was no spot more beautiful or better regulated. It was laid out with the most exquisite taste: the choicest flowers adorned it in the height of luxuriance, and, though artfully arranged, seemed only planted by the hand of nature. Fountains, springing from basins of white marble, cooled the air with perpetual showers, and the walls were entirely covered by jessamine, vines, and honeysuckles. The hour now added to the beauty of the scene. The full moon, ranging through a blue and cloudless sky, shed upon the trees a trembling lustre, and the waters of

the fountains sparkled in the silver beam; a gentle breeze breathed the fragrance of orange-blossoms along the alleys, and the nightingale poured forth her melodious murmur from the shelter of an artificial wilderness.—Thither the abbot bent his steps.

In the bosom of this little grove stood a rustic grotto, formed in imitation of an hermitage. The walls were constructed of roots of trees, and the interstices filled up with moss and ivy. Seats of turf were placed on either side, and a natural cascade fell from the rock above. Buried in himself, the monk approached the spot: the universal calm had communicated itself to his bosom, and a voluptuous tranquillity spread languor through his soul.

He reached the hermitage, and was entering to repose himself, when he stopped on perceiving it to be already occupied. Extended upon one of the banks lay a man in a melancholy posture: his head was supported upon his arm, and he seem-

ed lost in meditation. The monk drew nearer, and recognized Rosario: he watched him in silence, and entered not the hermitage.

After some minutes, the youth raised his eyes, and fixed them mournfully upon the opposite wall.

"Yes," said he, with a deep and plaintive sigh, "I feel all the happiness of thy situation—all the misery of my own. Happy were I could I think like thee!—could I look like thee with disgust upon mankind—could bury myself for ever in some impenetrable solitude, and forget that the world holds beings deserving to be loved! Oh God! what a blessing would misanthropy be to me!"

"That is a singular thought, Rosario," said the abbot, entering the grotto.

"You here, reverend father!" cried the novice; at the same time, starting from his place in confusion, he drew his cowl hastily over his face.

Ambrosio seated himself upon the bank,

and obliged the youth to place himself by him.

"You must not indulge this disposition to melancholy," said he: "what can possibly have made you view, in so desirable a light, misanthropy—of all sentiments the most hateful?"

"The perusal of these verses, father, which till now had escaped my observation. The brightness of the moonbeams permitted my reading them; and, oh! how I envy the feelings of the writer!"

As he said this, he pointed to a marble tablet, fixed against the opposite wall: on it were engraved the following lines:—

INSCRIPTION IN AN HERMITAGE.

Whoe'er thou art these lines now reading,
Think not, though from the world receding,
I joy my lonely days to lead in
This desert drear—
That with remorse a conscience bleeding
Hath led me here.

No thought of guilt my bosom sours:
Free-will'd, I fled from courtly bowers;
For well I saw, in halls and towers,
That Lust and Pride,
The arch-fiend's dearest, darkest powers,
In state preside.

I saw mankind with vice incrusted;
I saw that honour's sword was rusted;
That few for aught but folly lusted;
That he was still deceived who trusted
In love or friend;
And hither came, with men disgusted,
My life to end.

In this lone cave, in garments lowly,
Alike a foe to noisy folly,
And brow-bent gloomy melancholy,
I wear away
My life, and in my office holy
Consume the day.

This rock my shield, when storms are blowing;
The limpid streamlet yonder flowing
Supplying drink; the earth bestowing
My simple food;
But few enjoy the calm I know in
This desert rude.

Content and comfort bless me more in
This grot, than e'er I felt before in
A palace; and, with thoughts still soaring
To God on high,
Each night and morn, with voice imploring,
This wish I sigh:—

"Let me, oh Lord! from life retire,
Unknown each guilty worldly fire,
Remorseful throb, or loose desire!
And, when I die,
Let me in this belief expire—
To God I fly!"

Stranger! if, full of youth and riot,
As yet no grief has marr'd thy quiet,
Thou haply throw'st a scornful eye at
The Hermit's prayer:
But if thou hast a cause to sigh at
Thy fault, or care—

If thou hast known false love's vexation,
Or hast been exiled from thy nation,
Or guilt affrights thy contemplation,
And makes thee pine;
Oh, how must thou lament *thy* station,
And envy *mine!*

"Were it possible," said the friar, "for man to be so totally wrapped up in himself as to live in absolute seclusion from human nature, and could yet feel the contented tranquillity which these lines express, I allow that the situation would be more desirable, than to live in a world so pregnant with every vice and every folly: but this never can be the case. This inscription was merely placed here for the ornament of the grotto, and the sentiments and the hermit are equally imaginary. Man was born for society: however little he may be attached to the world, he never can wholly forget it, or bear to be wholly forgotten by it. Disgusted at the guilt or absurdity of mankind, the misanthrope flies from it; he resolves to become a hermit, and buries himself in the cavern of some gloomy rock. While hate inflames his bosom, possibly he may feel contented with his situation; but when his passions begin to cool, when time has mellowed his sorrows, and healed

those wounds which he bore with him to his solitude, think you that content becomes his companion? Ah, no, Rosario! No longer sustained by the violence of his passions, he feels all the monotony of his way of living, and his heart becomes the prey of ennui and weariness. He looks round, and finds himself alone in the universe; the love of society revives in his bosom, and he pants to return to that world which he has abandoned. Nature loses all her charms in his eyes: no one is near him, to point out her beauties, or share in his admiration of her excellence and variety. Propped upon the fragment of some rock, he gazes upon the tumbling waterfall with a vacant eye; he views, without emotion, the glory of the setting sun; slowly he returns to his cell at evening, for no one there is anxious for his arrival: he has no comfort in his solitary, unsavoury meal; he throws himself upon his couch of moss, despondent and dissa-

tisfied, and wakes only to pass a day as joyless, as monotonous as the former."

"You amaze me, father! Suppose that circumstances condemned you to solitude, would not the duties of religion, and the consciousness of a life well spent, communicate to your heart that calm which——"

"I should deceive myself, did I fancy that they could. I am convinced of the contrary, and that all my fortitude would not prevent me from yielding to melancholy and disgust. After consuming the day in study, if you knew my pleasure at meeting my brethren in the evening! After passing many a long hour in solitude, if I could express to you the joy which I feel at once more beholding a fellow-creature! 'Tis in this particular that I place the principal merit of a monastic institution. It secludes man from the temptations of vice; it procures that leisure necessary for the proper service of the

Supreme; it spares him the mortification of witnessing the crimes of the worldly, and yet permits him to enjoy the blessings of society. And do you, Rosario, do you envy an hermit's life? Can you be thus blind to the happiness of your situation? Reflect upon it for a moment.—This abbey is become your asylum; your regularity, your gentleness, your talents, have rendered you the object of universal esteem; you are secluded from the world, which you profess to hate—yet you remain in possession of the benefits of society, and that a society composed of the most estimable of mankind."

"Father! father! 'tis that which causes my torment. Happy had it been for me, had my life been passed among the vicious and abandoned—had I never heard pronounced the name of virtue. 'Tis my unbounded adoration of religion—'tis my soul's exquisite sensibility of the beauty of fair and good, that loads me with shame

—that hurries me to perdition. Oh that I had never seen these abbey walls!"

"How, Rosario? when we last conversed, you spoke in a different tone. Is my friendship, then, become of such little consequence? Had you never seen these abbey walls, you never had seen me. Can that really be your wish?"

"Had never seen you!" repeated the novice, starting from the bank, and grasping the friar's hand with a frantic air—"you! you! Would to God that lightning had blasted them before you ever met my eyes! would to God that I were never to see you more, and could forget that I had ever seen you!"

With these words he flew hastily from the grotto. Ambrosio remained in his former attitude, reflecting on the youth's unaccountable behaviour. He was inclined to suspect the derangement of his senses; yet the general tenor of his conduct, the connexion of his ideas, and calm-

ness of his demeanour, till the moment of his quitting the grotto, seemed to discountenance this conjecture. After a few minutes Rosario returned. He again seated himself upon the bank—he reclined his cheek upon one hand, and with the other wiped away the tears which trickled from his eyes at intervals.

The monk looked upon him with compassion, and forbore to interrupt his meditations. Both observed for some time a profound silence. The nightingale had now taken her station upon an orange tree, fronting the hermitage, and poured forth a strain the most melancholy and melodious.

Rosario raised his head, and listened to her with attention.—"It was thus," said he, with a deep-drawn sigh, "it was thus that, during the last month of her unhappy life, my sister used to sit listening to the nightingale. Poor Matilda! she sleeps in the grave, and her broken heart throbs no more with passion."

"You had a sister?"

"You say right—that I *had*. Alas! I have one no longer: she sunk beneath the weight of her sorrows in the very spring of life."

"What were those sorrows?"

"They will not excite *your* pity. *You* know not the power of those irresistible, those fatal sentiments to which her heart was a prey. Father, she *loved* unfortunately. A passion for one endowed with every virtue, for a man—oh, rather let me say for a divinity—proved the bane of her existence. His noble form, his spotless character, his various talents, his wisdom, solid, wonderful, and glorious, might have warmed the bosom of the most insensible. My sister saw him, and dared to love, though she never dared to hope."

"If her love was so well bestowed, what forbade her to hope the obtaining of its object?"

"Father, before he knew her, Julian

had already plighted his vows to a bride most fair, most heavenly. Yet still my sister loved, and for the husband's sake she doted upon the wife. One morning she found means to escape from our father's house: arrayed in humble weeds, she offered herself as a domestic to the consort of her beloved, and was accepted. She was now continually in his presence: she strove to ingratiate herself into his favour; she succeeded. Her attentions attracted Julian's notice: the virtuous are ever grateful, and he distinguished Matilda above the rest of her companions."

"And did not your parents seek for her? Did they submit tamely to their loss, nor attempt to recover their wandering daughter?"

"Ere they could find her, she discovered herself. Her love grew too violent for concealment; yet she wished not for Julian's person—she ambitioned but a share of his heart. In an unguarded moment she confessed her affection. What was

the return?—Doting upon his wife, and believing that a look of pity bestowed upon another was a theft from what he owed to her, he drove Matilda from his presence—he forbade her ever again appearing before him. His severity broke her heart: she returned to her father's, and in a few months after was carried to her grave."

"Unhappy girl! Surely her fate was too severe, and Julian was too cruel."

"Do you think so, father?" cried the novice, with vivacity: "do you think that he was cruel?"

"Doubtless I do, and pity her most sincerely."

"You pity her? you pity her? Oh, father! father! then pity me——"

The friar started; when, after a moment's pause, Rosario added, with a faltering voice—"For my sufferings are still greater: my sister had a friend, a real friend, who pitied the acuteness of her feelings, nor reproached her with her in-

ability to repress them. I—I have no friend! The whole wide world cannot furnish a heart that is willing to participate in the sorrows of mine."

As he uttered these words, he sobbed audibly. The friar was affected. He took Rosario's hand, and pressed it with tenderness.

"You have no friend, say you? What then am I? Why will you not confide in me? and what can you fear? My severity? Have I ever used it with you? The dignity of my habit? Rosario, I lay aside the monk, and bid you consider me as no other than your friend, your father. Well may I assume that title, for never did parent watch over a child more fondly than I have watched over you. From the moment in which I first beheld you, I perceived sensations in my bosom till then unknown to me; I found a delight in your society which no one's else could afford; and when I witnessed the extent of your genius and information, I rejoiced

as does a father in the perfections of his son. Then lay aside your fears; speak to me with openness—speak to me, Rosario, and say that you will confide in me. If my aid or my pity can alleviate your distress——"

"Yours can—yours only can. Ah, father! how willingly would I unveil to you my heart! how willingly would I declare the secret which bows me down with its weight! But oh! I fear, I fear——"

"What, my son?"

"That you should abhor me for my weakness—that the reward of my confidence should be the loss of your esteem."

"How shall I reassure you? Reflect upon the whole of my past conduct, upon the paternal tenderness which I have ever shewn you. Abhor you, Rosario! It is no longer in my power. To give up your society would be to deprive myself of the greatest pleasure of my life. Then reveal to me what afflicts you, and believe me while I solemnly swear——"

"Hold!" interrupted the novice. "Swear

that whatever be my secret, you will not oblige me to quit the monastery till my noviciate shall expire."

"I promise it faithfully; and as I keep my vows to you, may Christ keep his to mankind! Now, then, explain this mystery, and rely upon my indulgence."

"I obey you. Know then—Oh, how I tremble to name the word! Listen to me with pity, reverend Ambrosio! Call up every latent spark of human weakness that may teach you compassion for mine! Father!" continued he, throwing himself at the friar's feet, and pressing his hand to his lips with eagerness, while agitation for a moment choked his voice—"father!" continued he, in faltering accents, "I am a woman!"

The abbot started at this unexpected avowal. Prostrate on the ground lay the feigned Rosario, as if waiting in silence the decision of his judge. Astonishment on the one part, apprehension on the other, for some minutes chained them in the

same attitudes, as they had been touched by the rod of some magician. At length, recovering from his confusion, the monk quitted the grotto, and sped with precipitation towards the abbey. His action did not escape the suppliant. She sprang from the ground; she hastened to follow him, overtook him, threw herself in his passage, and embraced his knees. Ambrosio strove in vain to disengage himself from her grasp.

"Do not fly me!" she cried—"leave me not abandoned to the impulse of despair! Listen, while I excuse my imprudence—while I acknowledge my sister's story to be my own. I am Matilda—you are her beloved."

If Ambrosio's surprise was great at her first avowal, upon hearing her second it exceeded all bounds. Amazed, embarrassed, and irresolute, he found himself incapable of pronouncing a syllable, and remained in silence gazing upon Matilda. This gave her opportunity to continue her explanation as follows:—

"Think not, Ambrosio, that I come to rob your bride of your affections. No, believe me: Religion alone deserves you; and far is it from Matilda's wish to draw you from the paths of virtue. What I feel for you is love, not licentiousness. I sigh to be possessor of your heart, not lust for the enjoyment of your person. Deign to listen to my vindication: a few moments will convince you that this holy retreat is not polluted by my presence, and that you may grant me your compassion without trespassing against your vows."

She seated herself. Ambrosio, scarcely conscious of what he did, followed her example, and she proceeded in her discourse.

"I spring from a distinguished family; my father was chief of the noble house of Villanegas: he died while I was still an infant, and left me sole heiress of his immense possessions. Young and wealthy, I was sought in marriage by the noblest youths of Madrid; but no one succeeded in gaining my affections. I had been

brought up under the care of an uncle possessed of the most solid judgment and extensive erudition: he took pleasure in communicating to me some portion of his knowledge. Under his instructions my understanding acquired more strength and justness than generally falls to the lot of my sex: the ability of my preceptor being aided by natural curiosity, I not only made a considerable progress in sciences universally studied, but in others revealed but to few, and lying under censure from the blindness of superstition. But while my guardian laboured to enlarge the sphere of my knowledge, he carefully inculcated every moral precept: he relieved me from the shackles of vulgar prejudice; he pointed out the beauty of religion; he taught me to look with adoration upon the pure and virtuous; and, woe is me! I have obeyed him but too well.

"With such dispositions, judge whether I could observe with any other sentiment than disgust the vice, dissipation,

and ignorance, which disgrace our Spanish youth. I rejected every offer with disdain: my heart remained without a master, till chance conducted me to the cathedral of the Capuchins. Oh, surely on that day my guardian angel slumbered, neglectful of his charge! Then was it that I first beheld you: you supplied the superior's place, absent from illness. You cannot but remember the lively enthusiasm which your discourse created. Oh! how I drank your words! how your eloquence seemed to steal me from myself! I scarcely dared to breathe, fearing to lose a syllable; and while you spoke, methought a radiant glory beamed round your head, and your countenance shone with the majesty of a god. I retired from the church, glowing with admiration. From that moment you became the idol of my heart, the never-changing object of my meditations. I inquired respecting you. The reports which were made me of your mode of life, of your knowledge, piety, and self-denial, rivetted

the chains imposed on me by your eloquence. I was conscious that there was no longer a void in my heart; that I had found the man whom I had sought till then in vain. In expectation of hearing you again, every day I visited your cathedral: you remained secluded within the abbey walls, and I always withdrew, wretched and disappointed. The night was more propitious to me, for then you stood before me in my dreams; you vowed to me eternal friendship; you led me through the paths of virtue, and assisted me to support the vexations of life. The morning dispelled these pleasing visions: I awoke, and found myself separated from you by barriers which appeared insurmountable. Time seemed only to increase the strength of my passion. I grew melancholy and despondent; I fled from society, and my health declined daily. At length, no longer able to exist in this state of torture, I resolved to assume the disguise in which you see me. My artifice

was fortunate: I was received into the monastery, and succeeded in gaining your esteem.

"Now, then, I should have felt completely happy, had not my quiet been disturbed by the fear of detection. The pleasure which I received from your society was embittered by the idea, that perhaps I should soon be deprived of it; and my heart throbbed so rapturously at obtaining the marks of your friendship, as to convince me that I never should survive its loss. I resolved, therefore, not to leave the discovery of my sex to chance—to confess the whole to you, and throw myself entirely on your mercy and indulgence. Ah, Ambrosio! can I have been deceived? Can you be less generous than I thought you? I will not suspect it. You will not drive a wretch to despair; I shall still be permitted to see you, to converse with you, to adore you! Your virtues shall be my example through life; and, when we

expire, our bodies shall rest in the same grave."

She ceased.—While she spoke, a thousand opposing sentiments combated in Ambrosio's bosom. Surprise at the singularity of this adventure, confusion at her abrupt declaration; resentment at her boldness in entering the monastery, and consciousness of the austerity with which it behoved him to reply—such were the sentiments of which he was aware; but there were others also which did not obtain his notice. He perceived not that his vanity was flattered by the praises bestowed upon his eloquence and virtue; that he felt a secret pleasure in reflecting that a young and seemingly lovely woman had for his sake abandoned the world, and sacrificed every other passion to that which he had inspired; still less did he perceive, that his heart throbbed with desire, while his hand was pressed gently by Matilda's ivory fingers.

By degrees he recovered from his confusion; his ideas became less bewildered; he was immediately sensible of the extreme impropriety, should Matilda be permitted to remain in the abbey after this avowal of her sex.

He assumed an air of severity, and drew away his hand.—"How, lady!" said he, "can you really hope for my permission to remain amongst us? Even were I to grant your request, what good could you derive from it? Think you that I ever can reply to an affection, which——"

"No, father, no! I expect not to inspire you with a love like mine: I only wish for the liberty to be near you—to pass some hours of the day in your society—to obtain your compassion, your friendship, and esteem. Surely my request is not unreasonable."

"But reflect, lady—reflect only for a moment on the impropriety of my harbouring a woman in the abbey, and that too a woman who confesses that she loves me.

It must not be: the risk of your being discovered is too great, and I will not expose myself to so dangerous a temptation."

"Temptation, say you? Forget that I am a woman, and it no longer exists; consider me only as a friend, as an unfortunate, whose happiness, whose life depends upon your protection. Fear not, lest I should ever call to your remembrance that love, the most impetuous, the most unbounded, has induced me to disguise my sex, or that, instigated by desires offensive to *your* vows and my own honour, I should endeavour to seduce you from the path of rectitude. No, Ambrosio! learn to know me better. I love you for your virtues: lose them, and with them you lose my affections. I look upon you as a saint: prove to me that you are no more than man, and I quit you with disgust. Is it then from me that you fear temptation? from me, in whom the world's dazzling pleasures created no other sentiment than contempt? from me, whose attachment is

grounded on your exemption from human frailty? Oh, dismiss such injurious apprehensions! think nobler of me—think nobler of yourself! I am incapable of seducing you to error, and surely your virtue is established on a basis too firm to be shaken by unwarranted desires. Ambrosio! dearest Ambrosio! drive me not from your presence; remember your promise, and authorize my stay."

"Impossible, Matilda! *your* interest commands me to refuse your prayer, since I tremble for you, not for myself. After vanquishing the impetuous ebullitions of youth, after passing thirty years in mortification and penance, I might safely permit your stay, nor fear your inspiring me with warmer sentiments than pity; but to yourself, remaining in the abbey can produce none but fatal consequences. You will misconstrue my every word and action; you will seize every circumstance with avidity which encourages you to hope the return of your affection; insensibly, your

passions will gain a superiority over your reason, and far from being repressed by my presence, every moment which we pass together will only serve to irritate and excite them. Believe me, unhappy woman! you possess my sincere compassion. I am convinced that you have hitherto acted upon the purest motives; but though you are blind to the imprudence of your conduct, in me it would be culpable not to open your eyes. I feel that duty obliges my treating you with harshness; I must reject your prayer, and remove every shadow of hope which may aid to nourish sentiments so pernicious to your repose. Matilda, you must from hence to-morrow."

"To-morrow, Ambrosio? to-morrow? Oh, surely you cannot mean it! you cannot resolve on driving me to despair! you cannot have the cruelty——"

"You have heard my decision, and it must be obeyed: the laws of our order forbid your stay; it would be perjury to conceal that a woman is within these walls, and

my vows will oblige me to declare your story to the community. You must from hence. I pity you, but can do no more."

He pronounced these words in a faint and trembling voice; then, rising from his seat, he would have hastened towards the monastery. Uttering a loud shriek, Matilda followed, and detained him.

"Stay yet one moment, Ambrosio! hear me yet speak one word!"

"I dare not listen. Release me! you know my resolution."

"But one word, but one last word, and I have done!"

"Leave me. Your entreaties are in vain; you must from hence to-morrow."

"Go then, barbarian! But this resource is still left me."

As she said this she suddenly drew a poniard: she rent open her garment, and placed the weapon's point against her bosom.—"Father, I will never quit these walls alive!"

"Hold! hold, Matilda! what would you do?"

"You are determined, so am I. The moment that you leave me, I plunge this steel in my heart."

"Holy St. Francis! Matilda, have you your senses? Do you know the consequences of your action? that suicide is the greatest of crimes? that you destroy your soul? that you lose your claim to salvation? that you prepare for yourself everlasting torments?"

"I care not, I care not," she replied, passionately. "Either your hand guides me to paradise, or my own dooms me to perdition! Speak to me, Ambrosio! Tell me that you will conceal my story—that I shall remain your friend and your companion, or this poniard drinks my blood."

As she uttered these last words she lifted her arm, and made a motion as if to stab herself. The friar's eyes followed with dread the course of the dagger. She had torn open her habit, and her bosom

was half exposed. The weapon's point rested upon her left breast—and, oh! that was such a breast! The moonbeams darting full upon it enabled the monk to observe its dazzling whiteness: his eye dwelt with insatiable avidity upon the beauteous orb; a sensation till then unknown filled his heart with a mixture of anxiety and delight; a raging fire shot through every limb; the blood boiled in his veins, and a thousand wild wishes bewildered his imagination.

"Hold!" he cried, in a hurried faltering voice; "I can resist no longer! Stay then, enchantress! stay for my destruction!" he said, and rushing from the place, he hastened towards the monastery.

He regained his cell, and threw himself upon his couch, distracted, irresolute, and confused. He found it impossible for some time to arrange his ideas. The scene in which he had been engaged had excited such a variety of sentiments in his bosom, that he was incapable of deciding which

was predominant. He was irresolute what conduct he ought to hold with the disturber of his repose: he was conscious that prudence, religion, and propriety, necessitated his obliging her to quit the abbey; but, on the other hand, such powerful reasons authorized her stay, that he was but too much inclined to consent to her remaining. He could not avoid being flattered by Matilda's declaration, and at reflecting that he had unconsciously vanquished a heart which had resisted the attacks of Spain's noblest cavaliers: the manner in which he had gained her affections was also the most satisfactory to his vanity. He remembered the many happy hours which he had passed in Rosario's society, and dreaded that void in his heart which parting with him would occasion. Besides all this, he considered, that as Matilda was wealthy, her favour might be of essential benefit to the abbey.—"And what do I risk," said he to himself, "by authorizing her stay? May I not safely credit her as-

sertions? Will it not be easy for me to forget her sex, and still consider her as my friend and my disciple? Surely her love is as pure as she describes: had it been the offspring of mere licentiousness, would she so long have concealed it in her own bosom? would she not have employed some means to procure its gratification? She has done quite the contrary: she strove to keep me in ignorance of her sex, and nothing but the fear of detection, and my instances, would have compelled her to reveal the secret. She has observed the duties of religion not less strictly than myself: she has made no attempt to rouse my slumbering passions, nor has she ever conversed with me till this night on the subject of love. Had she been desirous to gain my affections, not my esteem, she would not have concealed from me her charms so carefully: at this very moment I have never seen her face; yet certainly that face must be lovely, and her person beautiful, to judge by her—by what I have seen."

As this last idea passed through his imagination, a blush spread itself over his cheek. Alarmed at the sentiments which he was indulging, he betook himself to prayer: he started from his couch, knelt before the beautiful Madona, and entreated her assistance in stifling such culpable emotions: he then returned to his bed, and resigned himself to slumber.

He awoke heated and unrefreshed. During his sleep, his inflamed imagination had presented him with none but the most voluptuous objects. Matilda stood before him in his dreams, and his eyes again dwelt upon her naked breast; she repeated her protestations of eternal love, threw her arms round his neck, and loaded him with kisses: he returned them; he clasped her passionately to his bosom, and—the vision was dissolved. Sometimes his dreams presented the image of his favourite Madona, and he fancied that he was kneeling before her: as he offered up his vows to her, the eyes of the

figure seemed to beam on him with inexpressible sweetness; he pressed his lips to hers, and found them warm: the animated form started from the canvas, embraced him affectionately, and his senses were unable to support delight so exquisite. Such were the scenes on which his thoughts were employed while sleeping: his unsatisfied desires placed before him the most lustful and provoking images, and he rioted in joys till then unknown to him.

He started from his couch, filled with confusion at the remembrance of his dreams: scarcely was he less ashamed when he reflected on his reasons of the former night, which induced him to authorize Matilda's stay. The cloud was now dissipated which had obscured his judgment; he shuddered when he beheld his arguments blazoned in their proper colours, and found that he had been a slave to flattery, to avarice, and self-love. If in one hour's conversation Matilda had produced a change so remarkable in his

sentiments, what had he not to dread from her remaining in the abbey? Become sensible of his danger, awakened from his dream of confidence, he resolved to insist on her departing without delay: he began to feel that he was not proof against temptation, and that, however Matilda might restrain herself within the bounds of modesty, he was unable to contend with those passions from which he falsely thought himself exempted.

"Agnes! Agnes!" he exclaimed, while reflecting on his embarrassments, "I already feel thy curse!"

He quitted his cell, determined upon dismissing the feigned Rosario. He appeared at matins; but his thoughts were absent, and he paid them but little attention: his head and brain were both of them filled with worldly objects, and he prayed without devotion. The service over, he descended into the garden; he bent his steps towards the same spot where on the preceding night he had made this embar-

rassing discovery: he doubted not that Matilda would seek him there. He was not deceived: she soon entered the hermitage, and approached the monk with a timid air. After a few minutes, during which both were silent, she appeared as if on the point of speaking; but the abbot, who during this time had been summoning up all his resolution, hastily interrupted her. Though still unconscious how extensive was its influence, he dreaded the melodious seduction of her voice.

"Seat yourself by my side, Matilda," said he, assuming a look of firmness, though carefully avoiding the least mixture of severity; "listen to me patiently, and believe that, in what I shall say, I am not more influenced by my own interest than by yours; believe that I feel for you the warmest friendship, the truest compassion; and that you cannot feel more grieved than I do, when I declare to you that we must never meet again."

"Ambrosio!" she cried, in a voice at

once expressive both of surprise and of sorrow.

"Be calm, my friend! my Rosario! still let me call you by that name so dear to me. Our separation is unavoidable; I blush to own how sensibly it affects me. But yet it must be so; I feel myself incapable of treating you with indifference, and that very conviction obliges me to insist upon your departure. Matilda, you must stay here no longer."

"Oh, where shall I now seek for probity? Disgusted with a perfidious world, in what happy region does Truth conceal herself? Father, I hoped that she resided here; I thought that your bosom had been her favourite shrine—and you too prove false? Oh God! and you, too, can betray me?"

"Matilda!"

"Yes, father, yes; 'tis with justice that I reproach you. Oh, where are your promises? My noviciate is not expired, and yet will you compel me to quit the mo-

nastery? Can you have the heart to drive me from you? and have I not received your solemn oath to the contrary?"

"I will not compel you to quit the monastery; you have received my solemn oath to the contrary: but yet, when I throw myself upon your generosity, when I declare to you the embarrassments in which your presence involves me, will you not release me from that oath? Reflect upon the danger of a discovery; upon the opprobrium in which such an event would plunge me: reflect, that my honour and reputation are at stake, and that my peace of mind depends on your compliance. As yet, my heart is free; I shall separate from you with regret, but not with despair: stay here, and a few weeks will sacrifice my happiness on the altar of your charms. You are but too interesting, too amiable! I should love you, I should dote on you! my bosom would become the prey of desires, which honour and my profession forbid me to gratify. If I resisted them, the

impetuosity of my wishes unsatisfied would drive me to madness: if I yielded to the temptation, I should sacrifice to one moment of guilty pleasure my reputation in this world, my salvation in the next. To you, then, I fly for defence against myself. Preserve me from losing the reward of thirty years of sufferings—preserve me from becoming the victim of remorse! *Your* heart has already felt the anguish of hopeless love: oh, then, if you really value me, spare mine that anguish! give me back my promise; fly from these walls! Go, and you bear with you my warmest prayers for your happiness, my friendship, my esteem, and admiration; stay, and you become to me the source of danger, of sufferings, of despair. Answer me, Matilda—what is your resolve?" She was silent.—"Will you not speak, Matilda? will you not name your choice?"

"Cruel! cruel!" she exclaimed, wringing her hands in agony: "you know too well that you offer me no choice; you

know too well that I can have no will but yours!"

"I was not then deceived. Matilda's generosity equals my expectations."

"Yes, I will prove the truth of my affection by submitting to a decree which cuts me to the very heart. Take back your promise: I will quit the monastery this very day. I have a relation, abbess of a convent in Estremadura: to her will I bend my steps, and shut myself from the world for ever. Yet tell me, father, shall I bear your good wishes with me to my solitude? Will you sometimes abstract your attention from heavenly objects to bestow a thought upon me?"

"Ah, Matilda! I fear that I shall think on you but too often for my repose!"

"Then I have nothing more to wish for, save that we may meet in heaven. Farewell, my friend! my Ambrosio! And yet, methinks I would fain bear with me some token of your regard."

"What shall I give you?"

"Something—any thing—one of those flowers will be sufficient." Here she pointed to a bush of roses, planted at the door of the grotto. "I will hide it in my bosom, and when I am dead, the nuns shall find it withered upon my heart."

The friar was unable to reply. With slow steps, and a soul heavy with affliction, he quitted the hermitage: he approached the bush, and stooped to pluck one of the roses. Suddenly he uttered a piercing cry, started back hastily, and let the flower, which he already held, fall from his hand.

Matilda heard the shriek, and flew anxiously towards him.

"What is the matter?" she cried. "Answer me, for God's sake! What has happened?"

"I have received my death," he replied in a faint voice. "Concealed among the roses, a serpent——"

Here the pain of his wound became so exquisite, that nature was unable to bear

it; his senses abandoned him, and he sunk inanimate into Matilda's arms.

Her distress was beyond the power of description. She rent her hair, beat her bosom, and not daring to quit Ambrosio, endeavoured, by loud cries, to summon the monks to her assistance. She at length succeeded. Alarmed by her shrieks, several of the brothers hastened to the spot, and the superior was conveyed back to the abbey. He was immediately put to bed, and the monk who officiated as surgeon to the fraternity prepared to examine the wound. By this time Ambrosio's hand had swelled to an extraordinary size: the remedies which had been administered to him, 'tis true, restored him to life, but not to his senses: he raved in all the horrors of delirium, foamed at the mouth, and four of the strongest monks were scarcely able to hold him in his bed.

Father Pablos, such was the surgeon's name, hastened to examine the wounded hand. The monks surrounded the bed,

anxiously waiting for the decision: among these the feigned Rosario appeared not the most insensible to the friar's calamity: he gazed upon the sufferer with inexpressible anguish; and his groans, which every moment escaped from his bosom, sufficiently betrayed the violence of his affliction.

Father Pablos probed the wound. As he drew out his instrument, its point was tinged with a greenish hue. He shook his head mournfully, and quitted the bedside.

"'Tis as I feared," said he; "there is no hope."

"No hope!" exclaimed the monks with one voice: "say you, no hope?"

"From the sudden effects, I suspected that the abbot was stung by a cientipedoro*: the venom which you see upon my instrument confirms my idea. He cannot live three days."

* The cientipedoro is supposed to be a native of Cuba, and to have been brought into Spain from that island in the vessel of Columbus.

"And can no possible remedy be found?" inquired Rosario.

"Without extracting the poison, he cannot recover; and how to extract it is to me still a secret. All that I can do is to apply such herbs to the wound as will relieve the anguish: the patient will be restored to his senses; but the venom will corrupt the whole mass of his blood, and in three days he will exist no longer."

Excessive was the universal grief, at hearing this decision. Pablos, as he had promised, dressed the wound, and then retired, followed by his companions. Rosario alone remained in the cell, the abbot, at his urgent entreaty, having been committed to his care. Ambrosio's strength worn out by the violence of his exertions, he had by this time fallen into a profound sleep. So totally was he overcome by weariness, that he scarcely gave any signs of life. He was still in this situation, when the monks returned to inquire whether any change had taken place? Pablos

loosened the bandage which concealed the wound, more from a principle of curiosity, than from indulging the hope of discovering any favourable symptoms. What was his astonishment at finding that the inflammation had totally subsided! He probed the hand; his instrument came out pure and unsullied; no traces of the venom were perceptible, and had not the orifice still been visible, Pablos might have doubted that there had ever been a wound.

He communicated this intelligence to his brethren: their delight was only equalled by their surprise. From the latter sentiment, however, they were soon released by explaining the circumstance according to their own ideas. They were perfectly convinced that their superior was a saint, and thought that nothing could be more natural than for St. Francis to have operated a miracle in his favour. This opinion was adopted unanimously. They declared it so loudly, and vociferat-

ed—"A miracle! a miracle!" with such fervour, that they soon interrupted Ambrosio's slumbers.

The monks immediately crowded round his bed, and expressed their satisfaction at his wonderful recovery. He was perfectly in his senses, and free from every complaint, except feeling weak and languid. Pablos gave him a strengthening medicine, and advised his keeping his bed for the two succeeding days: he then retired, having desired his patient not to exhaust himself by conversation, but rather to endeavour at taking some repose. The other monks followed his example, and the abbot and Rosario were left without observers.

For some minutes Ambrosio regarded his attendant with a look of mingled pleasure and apprehension. She was seated upon the side of the bed, her head bending down, and, as usual, enveloped in the cowl of her habit.

"And you are still here, Matilda?" said

the friar at length; "are you not satisfied with having so nearly effected my destruction, that nothing but a miracle could have saved me from the grave? Ah! surely Heaven sent that serpent to punish——"

Matilda interrupted him by putting her hand before his lips with an air of gaiety.

"Hush, father! hush! you must not talk."

"He who imposed that order knew not how interesting are the subjects on which I wish to speak."

"But I know it, and yet issue the same positive command. I am appointed your nurse, and you must not disobey my orders."

"You are in spirits, Matilda!"

"Well may I be so; I have just received a pleasure unexampled through my whole life."

"What was that pleasure?"

"What I must conceal from all, but most from you."

"But most from me? Nay then, I entreat you, Matilda——"

"Hush, father! hush! you must not

talk.—But as you do not seem inclined to sleep, shall I endeavour to amuse you with my harp?"

"How! I knew not that you understood music."

"Oh, I am a sorry performer! Yet, as silence is prescribed you for eight-and-forty hours, I may possibly entertain you, when wearied of your own reflections. I go to fetch my harp."

She soon returned with it.

"Now, father, what shall I sing? Will you hear the ballad which treats of the gallant Durandarte, who died in the famous battle of Roncevalles?"

"What you please, Matilda."

"Oh, call me not Matilda! call me Rosario; call me your friend. Those are the names which I love to hear from your lips. Now listen."

She then tuned her harp, and afterwards preluded for some moments with such exquisite taste as to prove her a perfect mistress of the instrument. The air

which she played was soft and plaintive. Ambrosio, while he listened, felt his uneasiness subside, and a pleasing melancholy spread itself into his bosom. Suddenly Matilda changed the strain: with a hand bold and rapid, she struck a few loud martial chords, and then chanted the following ballad to an air at once simple and melodious:—

DURANDARTE AND BELERMA.

Sad and fearful is the story
Of the Roncevalles fight;
On those fatal plains of glory
Perish'd many a gallant knight.

There fell Durandarte: never
Verse a nobler chieftain nam'd;
He, before his lips for ever
Clos'd in silence, thus exclaim'd:—

"Oh, Belerma! oh, my dear one!
For my pain and pleasure born!
Seven long years I serv'd thee, fair one;
Seven long years my fee was scorn.

" And when now thy heart, replying
To my wishes, burns like mine,
Cruel fate, my bliss denying,
Bids me every hope resign.

" Ah! though young I fall, believe me,
Death would never claim a sigh;
'Tis to lose thee, 'tis to leave thee,
Makes me think it hard to die!

" Oh, my cousin Montesinos!
By that friendship firm and dear,
Which from youth has liv'd between us,
Now my last petition hear:—

" When my soul, these limbs forsaking,
Eager seeks a purer air,
From my breast the cold heart taking,
Give it to Belerma's care.

" Say, I of my lands possessor
Nam'd her with my dying breath;
Say, my lips I op'd to bless her,
Ere they clos'd for aye in death!

" Twice a-week, too, how sincerely
I ador'd her, cousin, say:—
Twice a-week, for one who dearly
Lov'd her, cousin, bid her pray.

"Montesinos, now the hour
Mark'd by fate is near at hand;
Lo! my arm has lost its power;
Lo! I drop my trusty brand!

"Eyes, which forth beheld me going,
Homewards ne'er shall see me hie:
Cousin, stop those tears o'erflowing,
Let me on thy bosom die.

"Thy kind hand my eyelids closing,
Yet one favour I implore:
Pray thou for my soul's reposing,
When my heart shall throb no more.

"So shall Jesus, still attending,
Gracious to a Christian's vow,
Pleas'd accept my ghost ascending,
And a seat in heav'n allow."

Thus spoke gallant Durandarte;
Soon his brave heart broke in twain:
Greatly joy'd the Moorish party,
That the gallant knight was slain.

Bitter weeping, Montesinos
Took from him his helm and glaive;
Bitter weeping, Montesinos
Dug his gallant cousin's grave.

To perform his promise made, he
Cut the heart from out the breast,
That Belerma, wretched lady!
Might receive the last bequest.

Sad was Montesino's heart; he
Felt distress his bosom rend.—
"Oh, my cousin Durandarte,
Woe is me to view thy end!

"Sweet in manners, fair in favour,
Mild in temper, fierce in fight;
Warrior nobler, gentler, braver,
Never shall behold the light.

"Cousin, lo! my tears bedew thee;
How shall I thy loss survive!
Durandarte, he who slew thee,
Wherefore left he me alive?"

While she sung, Ambrosio listened with delight: never had he heard a voice more harmonious, and he wondered how such heavenly sounds could be produced by any but angels. But though he indulged the sense of hearing, a single look convinced him that he must not trust to that

of sight. The songstress sat at a little distance from his bed. The attitude in which she bent over her harp was easy and graceful: her cowl had fallen backwarder than usual; two coral lips were visible, ripe, fresh, and melting; and a chin, in whose dimples seemed to lurk a thousand Cupids. Her habit's long sleeve would have swept along the chords of the instrument: to prevent this inconvenience she had drawn it above her elbow, and by this means an arm was discovered, formed in the most perfect symmetry, the delicacy of whose skin might have contended with snow in whiteness. Ambrosio dared to look on her but once: that glance sufficed to convince him how dangerous was the presence of this seducing object. He closed his eyes, but strove in vain to banish her from his thoughts. There she still moved before him, adorned with all those charms which his heated imagination could supply. Every beauty which he had seen appeared embellished; and those still con-

cealed fancy represented to him in glowing colours. Still, however, his vows, and the necessity of keeping to them, were present to his memory. He struggled with desire, and shuddered when he beheld how deep was the precipice before him.

Matilda ceased to sing. Dreading the influence of her charms, Ambrosio remained with his eyes closed, and offered up his prayers to saint Francis to assist him in this dangerous trial. Matilda believed that he was sleeping: she rose from her seat, approached the bed softly, and for some minutes gazed upon him attentively.

"He sleeps!" said she at length, in a low voice, but whose accents the abbot distinguished perfectly. "Now then I may gaze upon him without offence—I may mix my breath with his—I may dote upon his features, and he cannot suspect me of impurity and deceit. He fears my seducing him to the violation of his vows. Oh, the unjust! Were it my wish to ex-

cite desire, should I conceal my features from him so carefully?—those features of which I daily hear him——"

She stopped, and was lost in her reflections.

"It was but yesterday," she continued—"but a few short hours have passed since I was dear to him; he esteemed me, and my heart was satisfied: now! oh, now, how cruelly is my situation changed! He looks on me with suspicion; he bids me leave him, leave him for ever. Oh, you, my saint, my idol!—you, holding the next place to God in my breast, yet two days, and my heart will be unveiled to you. Could you know my feelings, when I beheld your agony! could you know how much your sufferings have endeared you to me! But the time will come, when you will be convinced that my passion is pure and disinterested. Then you will pity me, and feel the whole weight of these sorrows."

As she said this, her voice was choked by weeping. While she bent over Ambrosio, a tear fell upon his cheek.

"Ah! I have disturbed him," cried Matilda, and retreated hastily.

Her alarm was ungrounded. None sleep so profoundly as those who are determined not to wake. The friar was in this predicament: he still seemed buried in a repose, which every succeeding minute rendered him less capable of enjoying. The burning tear had communicated its warmth to his heart.

"What affection! what purity!" said he, internally. "Ah! since my bosom is thus sensible of pity, what would it be if agitated by love?"

Matilda again quitted her seat, and retired to some distance from the bed. Ambrosio ventured to open his eyes, and to cast them upon her fearfully. Her face was turned from him: she rested her head in a melancholy posture upon her harp,

and gazed on the picture which hung opposite to the bed.

"Happy, happy image!" thus did she address the beautiful Madona; "'tis to you that he offers his prayers, 'tis on you that he gazes with admiration! I thought you would have lightened my sorrows; you have only served to increase their weight; you have made me feel, that, had I known him ere his vows were pronounced, Ambrosio and happiness might have been mine. With what pleasure he views this picture! with what fervour he addresses his prayers to the insensible image! Ah, may not his sentiments be inspired by some kind and secret genius, friend to my affection? May it not be man's natural instinct which informs him——? Be silent, idle hopes! let me not encourage an idea which takes from the brilliance of Ambrosio's virtue. 'Tis religion, not beauty, which attracts his admiration; 'tis not to the woman, but

the divinity, that he kneels. Would he but address to me the least tender expression which he pours forth to this Madona! would he but say, that, were he not already affianced to the church, he would not have despised Matilda! Oh, let me nourish that fond idea! Perhaps he may yet acknowledge that he feels for me more than pity, and that affection like mine might well have deserved a return. Perhaps he may own thus much when I lie on my deathbed. He then need not fear to infringe his vows, and the confession of his regard will soften the pangs of dying. Would I were sure of this! Oh, how earnestly should I sigh for the moment of dissolution!"

Of this discourse the abbot lost not a syllable; and the tone in which she pronounced these last words pierced to his heart. Involuntarily he raised himself from his pillow.—"Matilda!" he said in a troubled voice; "oh, my Matilda!"

She started at the sound, and turned to-

wards him hastily. The suddenness of her movement made her cowl fall back from her head; her features became visible to the monk's inquiring eye. What was his amazement at beholding the exact resemblance of his admired Madona! The same exquisite proportion of features, the same profusion of golden hair, the same rosy lips, heavenly eyes, and majesty of countenance, adorned Matilda! Uttering an exclamation of surprise, Ambrosio sunk back upon his pillow, and doubted whether the object before him was mortal or divine.

Matilda seemed penetrated with confusion. She remained motionless in her place, and supported herself upon her instrument. Her eyes were bent upon the earth, and her fair cheeks overspread with blushes. On recovering herself, her first action was to conceal her features. She then, in an unsteady and troubled voice, ventured to address these words to the friar:

"Accident has made you master of a

secret, which I never would have revealed but on the bed of death; yes, Ambrosio, in Matilda de Villanegas you see the original of your beloved Madona. Soon after I conceived my unfortunate passion, I formed the project of conveying to you my picture. Crowds of admirers had persuaded me that I possessed some beauty, and I was anxious to know what effect it would produce upon you. I caused my portrait to be drawn by Martin Galuppi, a celebrated Venetian, at that time resident in Madrid. The resemblance was striking: I sent it to the Capuchin abbey as if for sale; and the Jew from whom you bought it was one of my emissaries. You purchased it. Judge of my rapture, when informed that you had gazed upon it with delight, or rather with adoration; that you had suspended it in your cell, and that you addressed your supplications to no other saint! Will this discovery make me still more regarded as an object of suspicion? Rather should it convince you

how pure is my affection, and engage you to suffer me in your society and esteem. I heard you daily extol the praises of my portrait; I was an eye-witness of the transports which its beauty excited in you: yet I forbore to use against your virtue those arms with which yourself had furnished me; I concealed those features from your sight, which you loved unconsciously—I strove not to excite desire by displaying my charms, or to make myself mistress of your heart through the medium of your senses. To attract your notice by studiously attending to religious duties, to endear myself to you by convincing you that my mind was virtuous, and my attachment sincere; such was my only aim. I succeeded; I became your companion and your friend. I concealed my sex from your knowledge; and had you not pressed me to reveal my secret, had I not been tormented by the fear of a discovery, never had you known me for any other than Rosario. And still are you re-

solved to drive me from you? The few hours of life which yet remain for me, may I not pass them in your presence?—Oh, speak, Ambrosio, and tell me that I may stay!"

This speech gave the abbot an opportunity of recollecting himself. He was conscious that, in the present disposition of his mind, avoiding her society was his only refuge from the power of this enchanting woman.

"Your declaration has so much astonished me," said he, "that I am at present incapable of answering you. Do not insist upon a reply, Matilda: leave me to myself—I have need to be alone."

"I obey you; but, before I go, promise not to insist upon my quitting the abbey immediately."

"Matilda, reflect upon your situation; reflect upon the consequences of your stay: our separation is indispensable, and we must part."

"But not to-day, father! Oh, in pity, not to-day!"

"You press me too hard; but I cannot resist that tone of supplication. Since you insist upon it, I yield to your prayer; I consent to your remaining here a sufficient time to prepare, in some measure, the brethren for your departure: stay yet two days; but on the third," he sighed involuntarily, "remember, that on the third we must part for ever!"

She caught his hand eagerly, and pressed it to her lips.

"On the third!" she exclaimed, with an air of wild solemnity. "You are right, father, you are right; on the third we must part for ever!"

There was a dreadful expression in her eye, as she uttered these words, which penetrated the friar's soul with horror. Again she kissed his hand, and then fled with rapidity from the chamber.

Anxious to authorize the presence of his

dangerous guest, yet conscious that her stay was infringing the laws of his order, Ambrosio's bosom became the theatre of a thousand contending passions. At length his attachment to the feigned Rosario, aided by the natural warmth of his temperament, seemed likely to obtain the victory: the success was assured, when that presumption which formed the groundwork of his character came to Matilda's assistance. The monk reflected that to vanquish temptation was an infinitely greater merit than to avoid it; he thought that he ought rather to rejoice in the opportunity given him of proving the firmness of his virtue. St. Anthony had withstood all seductions to lust—then why should not he? Besides, St. Anthony was tempted by the devil, who put every art into practice to excite his passions; whereas Ambrosio's danger proceeded from a mere mortal woman, fearful and modest, whose apprehensions of his yielding were not less violent than his own.

"Yes," said he, "the unfortunate shall

stay; I have nothing to fear from her presence: even should my own prove too weak to resist the temptation, I am secured from danger by the innocence of Matilda."

Ambrosio was yet to learn, that, to a heart unacquainted with her, vice is ever most dangerous when lurking behind the mask of virtue.

He found himself so perfectly recovered, that, when father Pablos visited him again at night, he entreated permission to quit his chamber on the day following. His request was granted. Matilda appeared no more that evening, except in company with the monks when they came in a body to inquire after the abbot's health. She seemed fearful of conversing with him in private, and staid but a few minutes in his room. The friar slept well; but the dreams of the former night were repeated, and his sensations of voluptuousness were yet more keen and exquisite: the same lust-exciting visions floated before his eyes; Matilda, in all the pomp of beauty, warm, tender, and

luxurious, clasped him to her bosom, and lavished upon him the most ardent caresses. He returned them as eagerly; and already was on the point of satisfying his desires, when the faithless form disappeared, and left him to all the horrors of shame and disappointment.

The morning dawned. Fatigued, harassed, and exhausted, by his provoking dreams, he was not disposed to quit his bed: he excused himself from appearing at matins: it was the first morning in his life that he had ever missed them. He rose late; during the whole of the day he had no opportunity of speaking to Matilda without witnesses; his cell was thronged by the monks, anxious to express their concern at his illness; and he was still occupied in receiving their compliments on his recovery, when the bell summoned them to the refectory.

After dinner the monks separated, and dispersed themselves in various parts of the garden, where the shade of trees or re-

tirement of some grotto presented the most agreeable means of enjoying the siesta. The abbot bent his steps towards the hermitage; a glance of his eye invited Matilda to accompany him: she obeyed, and followed him thither in silence. They entered the grotto, and seated themselves: both seemed unwilling to begin the conversation, and to labour under the influence of mutual embarrassment. At length the abbot spoke: he conversed only on indifferent topics, and Matilda answered him in the same tone; she seemed anxious to make him forget that the person who sat by him was any other than Rosario. Neither of them dared, or indeed wished, to make an allusion to the subject which was most at the heart of both.

Matilda's efforts to appear gay were evidently forced: her spirits were oppressed by the weight of anxiety; and when she spoke, her voice was low and feeble: she seemed desirous of finishing a conversation which embarrassed her; and, complaining

that she was unwell, she requested Ambrosio's permission to return to the abbey. He accompanied her to the door of her cell; and, when arrived there, he stopped her to declare his consent to her continuing the partner of his solitude, so long as should be agreeable to herself.

She discovered no marks of pleasure at receiving this intelligence, though on the preceding day she had been so anxious to obtain the permission.

"Alas, father," she said, waving her head mournfully, "your kindness comes too late; my doom is fixed; we must separate for ever: yet believe that I am grateful for your generosity, for your compassion of an unfortunate, who is but too little deserving of it."

She put her handkerchief to her eyes; her cowl was only half drawn over her face. Ambrosio observed that she was pale, and her eyes sunk and heavy.

"Good God!" he cried, "you are very

ill, Matilda; I shall send father Pablos to you instantly."

"No, do not: I am ill, 'tis true, but he cannot cure my malady. Farewell, father! Remember me in your prayers to-morrow, while I shall remember you in heaven."

She entered her cell, and closed the door.

The abbot dispatched to her the physician without losing a moment, and waited his report impatiently; but father Pablos soon returned, and declared that his errand had been fruitless. Rosario refused to admit him, and had positively rejected his offers of assistance. The uneasiness which this account gave Ambrosio was not trifling; yet he determined that Matilda should have her own way for that night, but that, if her situation did not mend by the morning, he would insist upon her taking the advice of father Pablos.

He did not find himself inclined to sleep; he opened his casement, and gazed upon the moonbeams as they played upon the

small stream whose waters bathed the walls of the monastery. The coolness of the night-breeze, and tranquillity of the hour, inspired the friar's mind with sadness: he thought upon Matilda's beauty and affection; upon the pleasures which he might have shared with her, had he not been restrained by monastic fetters. He reflected that, unsustained by hope, her love for him could not long exist; that doubtless she would succeed in extinguishing her passion, and seek for happiness in the arms of one more fortunate. He shuddered at the void which her absence would leave in his bosom; he looked with disgust on the monotony of a convent, and breathed a sigh towards that world from which he was for ever separated. Such were the reflections which a loud knocking at his door interrupted. The bell of the church had already struck two. The abbot hastened to inquire the cause of this disturbance. He opened the door of his cell, and a lay-brother entered, whose looks declared his hurry and confusion.

"Hasten, reverend father!" said he, "hasten to the young Rosario! he earnestly requests to see you; he lies at the point of death."

"Gracious God! where is father Pablos? Why is he not with him? Oh! I fear, I fear——"

"Father Pablos has seen him, but his art can do nothing. He says that he suspects the youth to be poisoned."

"Poisoned? Oh, the unfortunate! It is then as I suspected! But let me not lose a moment; perhaps it may yet be time to save her."

He said, and flew towards the cell of the novice. Several monks were already in the chamber; father Pablos was one of them, and held a medicine in his hand, which he was endeavouring to persuade Rosario to swallow. The others were employed in admiring the patient's divine countenance, which they now saw for the first time. She looked lovelier than ever: she was no longer pale or languid; a bright glow had spread itself over her cheeks; her eyes

sparkled with a serene delight, and her countenance was expressive of confidence and resignation.

"Oh! torment me no more!" was she saying to Pablos, when the terrified abbot rushed hastily into the cell; "my disease is far beyond the reach of your skill, and I wish not to be cured of it." Then perceiving Ambrosio—"Ah, 'tis he!" she cried; "I see him once again before we part for ever! Leave me, my brethren; much have I to tell this holy man in private."

The monks retired immediately, and Matilda and the abbot remained together.

"What have you done, imprudent woman?" exclaimed the latter, as soon as they were left alone: "tell me, are my suspicions just? Am I indeed to lose you? Has your own hand been the instrument of your destruction?"

She smiled, and grasped his hand.

"In what have I been imprudent, father? I have sacrificed a pebble, and saved a diamond. My death preserves a life va-

luable to the world, and more dear to me than my own.—Yes, father, I am poisoned; but know, that the poison once circulated in your veins."

"Matilda!"

"What I tell you I resolved never to discover to you but on the bed of death; that moment is now arrived. You cannot have forgotten the day already, when your life was endangered by the bite of a cientipedoro. The physician gave you over, declaring himself ignorant how to extract the venom. I knew but of one means, and hesitated not a moment to employ it. I was left alone with you; you slept; I loosened the bandage from your hand; I kissed the wound, and drew out the poison with my lips. The effect has been more sudden than I expected. I feel death at my heart; yet an hour, and I shall be in a better world."

"Almighty God!" exclaimed the abbot, and sunk almost lifeless upon the bed.

After a few minutes he again raised him-

self up suddenly, and gazed upon Matilda with all the wildness of despair.

"And you have sacrificed yourself for me! You die, and die to preserve Ambrosio! And is there, indeed, no remedy, Matilda? And is there, indeed, no hope? Speak to me! oh, speak to me!—tell me that you have still the means of life!"

"Be comforted, my only friend! Yes, I have still the means of life in my power; but it is a means which I dare not employ; it is dangerous, it is dreadful! Life would be purchased at too dear a rate—unless it were permitted me to live for you."

"Then live for me, Matilda—for me and gratitude!" He caught her hand, and pressed it rapturously to his lips. "Remember our late conversations; I now consent to every thing. Remember in what lively colours you described the union of souls; be it ours to realize those ideas. Let us forget the distinctions of sex, despise the world's prejudices, and only consider

each other as brother and friend. Live then, Matilda—oh, live for me!"

"Ambrosio, it must not be. When I thought thus, I deceived both you and myself: either I must die at present, or expire by the lingering torments of unsatisfied desire. Oh, since we last conversed together, a dreadful veil has been rent from before my eyes. I love you no longer with the devotion which is paid to a saint—I prize you no more for the virtues of your soul—I lust for the enjoyment of your person. The woman reigns in my bosom, and I am become a prey to the wildest of passions. Away with friendship! 'tis a cold, unfeeling word: my bosom burns with love, with unutterable love, and love must be its return. Tremble then, Ambrosio! tremble to succeed in your prayers! If I live, your truth, your reputation, your reward of a life past in sufferings, all that you value, is irretrievably lost. I shall no longer be able to combat my passions, shall seize every opportunity to excite your desires,

and labour to effect your dishonour and my own. No, no, Ambrosio, I must not live; I am convinced with every moment that I have but one alternative; I feel with every heart-throb that I must enjoy you or die."

"Amazement, Matilda! Can it be you who speak to me?"

He made a movement, as if to quit his seat. She uttered a loud shriek, and raising herself half out of the bed, threw her arms round the friar to detain him.

"Oh, do not leave me! Listen to my errors with compassion: in a few hours I shall be no more: yet a little, and I am free from this disgraceful passion."

"Wretched woman! what can I say to you? I cannot—I must not—But live, Matilda! oh, live!"

"You do not reflect on what you ask. What, live to plunge myself in infamy? to become the agent of hell?—to work the destruction both of you and of myself? Feel this heart, father."

She took his hand. Confused, embarrassed, and fascinated, he withdrew it not, and felt her heart throb under it.

"Feel this heart, father. It is yet the seat of honour, truth, and chastity: if it beats to-morrow, it must fall a prey to the blackest crimes. Oh, let me, then, die to-day!—let me die while I yet deserve the tears of the virtuous! Thus will I expire!" She reclined her head upon his shoulder; her golden hair poured itself over his chest. "Folded in your arms, I shall sink to sleep; your hand shall close my eyes for ever, and your lips receive my dying breath. And will you not sometimes think of me?—will you not sometimes shed a tear upon my tomb? Oh yes, yes, yes! that kiss is my assurance."

The hour was night. All was silence around. The faint beams of a solitary lamp darted upon Matilda's figure, and shed through the chamber a dim mysterious light. No prying eye, or curious ear was near the lovers: nothing was heard but

Matilda's melodious accents. Ambrosio was in the full vigour of manhood; he saw before him a young and beautiful woman, the preserver of his life, the adorer of his person, and whom affection for him had reduced to the brink of the grave. He sat upon her bed; his hand rested upon her bosom; her head reclined voluptuously upon his breast. Who then can wonder if he yielded to the temptation? Drunk with desire, he pressed his lips to those which sought them; his kisses vied with Matilda's in warmth and passion: he clasped her rapturously in his arms; he forgot his vows, his sanctity, and his fame; he remembered nothing but the pleasure and opportunity.

"Ambrosio!—oh, my Ambrosio!" sighed Matilda.

"Thine, ever thine," murmured the friar, and sunk upon her bosom.

CHAPTER III.

——These are the villains
Whom all the travellers do fear so much.
——Some of them are gentlemen,
Such as the fury of ungovern'd youth
Thrust from the company of awful men.

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

THE marquis and Lorenzo proceeded to the hotel in silence. The former employed himself in calling every circumstance to his mind, which related, might give Lorenzo's the most favourable idea of his connexion with Agnes. The latter, justly alarmed for the honour of his family, felt embarrassed by the presence of the marquis: the adventure which he had just witnessed forbade his treating him as a friend, and Antonia's interests being intrusted to his mediation, he saw the im-

policy of treating him as a foe. He concluded from these reflections, that profound silence would be the wisest plan, and waited with impatience for don Raymond's explanation.

They arrived at the hotel de las Cisternas. The marquis immediately conducted him to his apartment, and began to express his satisfaction at finding him at Madrid.

Lorenzo interrupted him.—"Excuse me, my lord," said he, with a distant air, "if I reply somewhat coldly to your expressions of regard. A sister's honour is involved in this affair: till that is established, and the purport of your correspondence with Agnes cleared up, I cannot consider you as my friend. I am anxious to hear the meaning of your conduct, and hope that you will not delay the promised explanation."

"First give me your word, that you will listen with patience and indulgence."

"I love my sister too well to judge her

harshly; and till this moment I possessed no friend so dear to me as yourself. I will also confess, that your having it in your power to oblige me in a business which I have much at heart makes me very anxious to find you still deserving my esteem."

"Lorenzo, you transport me! No greater pleasure can be given me than an opportunity of serving the brother of Agnes."

"Convince me that I can accept your favours without dishonour, and there is no man in the world to whom I am more willing to be obliged."

"Probably you have already heard your sister mention the name of Alphonso d'Alvarada?"

"Never. Though I feel for Agnes an affection truly fraternal, circumstances have prevented us from being much together. While yet a child, she was consigned to the care of her aunt, who had married a German nobleman. At his cas-

tle she remained till two years since, when she returned to Spain, determined upon secluding herself from the world."

"Good God, Lorenzo! you knew of her intention, and yet strove not to make her change it?"

"Marquis, you wrong me: the intelligence which I received at Naples shocked me extremely, and I hastened my return to Madrid for the express purpose of preventing the sacrifice. The moment that I arrived, I flew to the convent of St. Clare, in which Agnes had chosen to perform her noviciate. I requested to see my sister. Conceive my surprise when she sent me a refusal: she declared positively that, apprehending my influence over her mind, she would not trust herself in my society till the day before that on which she was to receive the veil. I supplicated the nuns; I insisted upon seeing Agnes, and hesitated not to avow my suspicions, that her being kept from me was against her own inclinations. To free

herself from the imputation of violence, the prioress brought me a few lines, written in my sister's well-known hand, repeating the message already delivered. All future attempts to obtain a moment's conversation with her were as fruitless as the first. She was inflexible, and I was not permitted to see her till the day preceding that on which she entered the cloister, never to quit it more. This interview took place in the presence of our principal relations. It was for the first time since her childhood that I saw her, and the scene was most affecting: she threw herself upon my bosom, kissed me, and wept bitterly. By every possible argument, by tears, by prayers, by kneeling, I strove to make her abandon her intention. I represented to her all the hardships of a religious life; I painted to her imagination all the pleasures which she was going to quit, and besought her to disclose to me what occasioned her disgust to the world. At this last question she

turned pale, and her tears flowed yet faster. She entreated me not to press her on that subject; that it sufficed me to know that her resolution was taken, and that a convent was the only place where she could now hope for tranquillity. She persevered in her design, and made her profession. I visited her frequently at the grate; and every moment that I passed with her made me feel more affliction at her loss. I was shortly after obliged to quit Madrid; I returned but yesterday evening, and since then have not had time to call at St. Clare's convent."

"Then, till I mentioned it, you never heard the name of Alphonso d'Alvarada?"

"Pardon me: my aunt wrote me word, that an adventurer so called had found means to get introduced into the castle of Lindenberg; that he had insinuated himself into my sister's good graces; and that she had even consented to elope with him. However, before the plan could be executed, the cavalier discovered that the

estates which he believed Agnes to possess in Hispaniola, in reality belonged to me. This intelligence made him change his intention: he disappeared on the day that the elopement was to have taken place; and Agnes, in despair at his perfidy and meanness, had resolved upon seclusion in a convent. She added, that as this adventurer had given himself out to be a friend of mine, she wished to know whether I had any knowledge of him. I replied in the negative. I had then very little idea that Alphonso d'Alvarada and the marquis de las Cisternas were one and the same person: the description given me of the first by no means tallied with what I knew of the latter."

"In this I easily recognize donna Rodolpha's perfidious character. Every word of this account is stamped with marks of her malice, of her falsehood, of her talents for misrepresenting those whom she wishes to injure. Forgive me, Medina, for speaking so freely of your relation. The mis-

chief which she has done me authorizes my resentment; and when you have heard my story, you will be convinced that my expressions have not been too severe."

He then began his narrative in the following manner:—

HISTORY OF DON RAYMOND, MARQUIS DE LAS CISTERNAS.

"Long experience, my dear Lorenzo, has convinced me how generous is your nature: I waited not for your declaration of ignorance respecting your sister's adventures, to suppose that they had been purposely concealed from you. Had they reached your knowledge, from what misfortunes should both Agnes and myself have escaped! Fate had ordained it otherwise. You were on your travels when I first became acquainted with your sister; and as our enemies took care to conceal from her your direction, it was impossible

for her to implore by letter your protection and advice.

"On leaving Salamanca, at which university, as I have since heard, you remained a year after I quitted it, I immediately set out upon my travels. My father supplied me liberally with money; but he insisted upon my concealing my rank, and presenting myself as no more than a private gentleman. This command was issued by the counsels of his friend the duke of Villa Hermosa, a nobleman for whose abilities and knowledge of the world I have ever entertained the most profound veneration.

'Believe me,' said he, 'my dear Raymond, you will hereafter feel the benefits of this temporary degradation. 'Tis true, that as the condé de las Cisternas, you would have been received with open arms, and your youthful vanity might have felt gratified by the attentions showered upon you from all sides. At present, much will depend upon yourself: you have excellent

recommendations, but it must be your own business to make them of use to you: you must lay yourself out to please; you must labour to gain the approbation of those to whom you are presented: they who would have courted the friendship of the condé de las Cisternas will have no interest in finding out the merits, or bearing patiently with the faults of Alphonso d'Alvarada; consequently, when you find yourself really liked, you may safely ascribe it to your good qualities, not your rank, and the distinction shewn you will be infinitely more flattering. Besides, your exalted birth would not permit your mixing with the lower classes of society, which will now be in your power, and from which, in my opinion, you will derive considerable benefit. Do not confine yourself to the illustrious of those countries through which you pass. Examine the manners and customs of the multitude: enter into the cottages, and by observing how the vassals of foreigners are treated,

learn to diminish the burthens, and augment the comforts of your own. According to my ideas of those advantages which a youth destined to the possession of power and wealth may reap from travel, he should not consider as the least essential the opportunity of mixing with the classes below him, and becoming an eye-witness of the sufferings of the people.'

"Forgive me, Lorenzo, if I seem tedious in my narration: the close connexion which now exists between us makes me anxious that you should know every particular respecting me; and in my fear of omitting the least circumstance which may induce you to think favourably of your sister and myself, I may possibly relate many which you may think uninteresting.

"I followed the duke's advice: I was soon convinced of its wisdom. I quitted Spain, calling myself by the assumed title of don Alphonso d'Alvarada, and attended by a single domestic of approved fidelity.

Paris was my first station. For some time I was enchanted with it, as indeed must be every man who is young, rich, and fond of pleasure. Yet among all its gaieties, I felt that something was wanting to my heart: I grew sick of dissipation—I discovered that the people among whom I lived, and whose exterior was so polished and seducing, were at bottom frivolous, unfeeling, and insincere. I turned from the inhabitants of Paris with disgust, and quitted that theatre of luxury without heaving one sigh of regret.

"I now bent my course towards Germany, intending to visit most of the principal courts. Prior to this expedition, I meant to make some little stay at Strasbourg. On quitting my chaise at Luneville, to take some refreshment, I observed a splendid equipage, attended by four domestics in rich liveries, waiting at the door of the Silver Lion. Soon after, as I looked out of the window, I saw a lady of noble presence, followed by two female attend-

ants, step into the carriage, which drove off immediately.

"I inquired of the host who the lady was that had just departed.

'A German baroness, monsieur, of great rank and fortune; she has been upon a visit to the duchess of Longueville, as her servants informed me. She is going to Strasbourg, where she will find her husband, and then both return to their castle in Germany.'

"I resumed my journey, intending to reach Strasbourg that night. My hopes, however, were frustrated by the breaking down of my chaise: the accident happened in the middle of a thick forest, and I was not a little embarrassed as to the means of proceeding. It was the depth of winter; the night was already closing round us, and Strasbourg, which was the nearest town, was still distant from us several leagues. It seemed to me that my only alternative to passing the night in the forest, was to take my servant's horse

and ride on to Strasbourg—an undertaking at that season very far from agreeable. However, seeing no other resource, I was obliged to make up my mind to it: accordingly I communicated my design to the postillion, telling him that I would send people to assist him, as soon as I reached Strasbourg. I had not much confidence in his honesty, but Stephano being well armed, and the driver, to all appearance, considerably advanced in years, I believed I ran no risk of losing my baggage.

"Luckily, as I then thought, an opportunity presented itself of passing the night more agreeably than I expected. On mentioning my design of proceeding by myself to Strasbourg, the postillion shook his head in disapprobation.

'It is a long way,' said he; 'you will find it a difficult matter to arrive there without a guide: besides, monsieur seems unaccustomed to the season's severity; and 'tis possible that, unable to sustain the excessive cold——'

'What use is there to present me with all these objections?' said I, impatiently interrupting him: 'I have no other resource; I run still greater risk of perishing with cold by passing the night in the forest.'

'Passing the night in the forest!' he replied: 'oh, by St. Denis! we are not in so bad a plight as that comes to yet. If I am not mistaken, we are scarcely five minutes' walk from the cottage of my old friend Baptiste: he is a woodcutter, and a very honest fellow. I doubt not but he will shelter you for the night with pleasure. In the meantime, I can take the saddle-horse, ride to Strasbourg, and be back with proper people to mend your carriage by break of day.'

'And in the name of God,' said I, 'how could you leave me so long in suspense? why did you not tell me of this cottage sooner? What excessive stupidity!'

'I thought, that perhaps monsieur would not deign to accept——'

'Absurd! Come, come, say no more, but conduct us without delay to the woodman's cottage.'

"He obeyed, and we moved onwards: the horses contrived, with some difficulty, to drag the shattered vehicle after us. My servant was become almost speechless, and I began to feel the effects of the cold myself before we reached the wished-for cottage. It was a small but neat building: as we drew near it, I rejoiced at observing through the window the blaze of a comfortable fire. Our conductor knocked at the door: it was some time before any one answered; the people within seemed in doubt whether we should be admitted.

'Come, come, friend Baptiste!' cried the driver with impatience; 'what are you about? Are you asleep? Or will you refuse a night's lodging to a gentleman, whose chaise has just broken down in the forest?'

'Ah! is it you, honest Claude?' replied

a man's voice from within: 'wait a moment, and the door shall be opened.'

"Soon after the bolts were drawn back, the door was unclosed, and a man presented himself to us with a lamp in his hand: he gave the guide a hearty reception, and then addressed himself to me:—

'Walk in, monsieur—walk in, and welcome. Excuse me for not admitting you at first; but there are so many rogues about this place, that, saving your presence, I suspected you to be one.'

"Thus saying, he ushered me into the room where I had observed the fire. I was immediately placed in an easy chair, which stood close to the hearth. A female, whom I supposed to be the wife of my host, rose from her seat upon my entrance, and received me with a slight and distant reverence. She made no answer to my compliment, but immediately reseating herself, continued the work on which she had been employed. Her hus-

band's manners were as friendly as hers were harsh and repulsive.

'I wish I could lodge you more conveniently, monsieur,' said he, 'but we cannot boast of much spare room in this hovel. However, a chamber for yourself, and another for your servant, I think we can make shift to supply. You must content yourself with sorry fare; but to what we have, believe me, you are heartily welcome.'—Then turning to his wife—'Why, how you sit there, Marguerite, with as much tranquillity as if you had nothing better to do! Stir about, dame! stir about! Get some supper; look out some sheets. Here, here! throw some logs upon the fire, for the gentleman seems perished with cold.'

"The wife threw her work hastily upon the table, and proceeded to execute his commands with every mark of unwillingness. Her countenance had displeased me on the first moment of my examining it: yet, upon the whole, her features were

handsome unquestionably; but her skin was sallow, and her person thin and meagre; a louring gloom overspread her countenance, and it bore such visible marks of rancour and ill-will as could not escape being noticed by the most inattentive observer: her every look and action expressed discontent and impatience; and the answers which she gave Baptiste, when he reproached her good-humouredly for her dissatisfied air, were tart, short, and cutting. In fine, I conceived at first sight equal disgust for her and prepossession in favour of her husband, whose appearance was calculated to inspire esteem and confidence. His countenance was open, sincere, and friendly; his manners had all the peasant's honesty, unaccompanied by his rudeness; his cheeks were broad, full, and ruddy, and in the solidity of his person he seemed to offer an ample apology for the leanness of his wife's. From the wrinkles on his brow, I judged him to be turned of sixty; but he bore his years

well, and seemed still hearty and strong. The wife could not be more than thirty, but in spirits and vivacity she was infinitely older than the husband.

"However, in spite of her unwillingness, Marguerite began to prepare the supper, while the woodman conversed gaily on different subjects. The postillion, who had been furnished with a bottle of spirits, was now ready to set out for Strasbourg, and inquired whether I had any further commands.

'For Strasbourg!' interrupted Baptiste; 'you are not going thither to-night?'

'I beg your pardon: if I do not fetch workmen to mend the chaise, how is monsieur to proceed to-morrow?'

'That is true, as you say: I had forgotten the chaise. Well, but, Claude, you may at least eat your supper here? That can make you lose very little time; and monsieur looks too kind-hearted to

send you out with an empty stomach on such a bitter cold night as this is.'

"To this I readily assented, telling the postillion that my reaching Strasbourg the next day an hour or two later would be perfectly immaterial. He thanked me, and then leaving the cottage with Stephano, put up his horses in the woodman's stable. Baptiste followed them to the door, and looked out with anxiety.

'"Tis a sharp, biting wind,' said he: 'I wonder what detains my boys so long! Monsieur, I shall shew you two of the finest lads that ever stepped in shoe of leather: the eldest is three-and-twenty, the second a year younger: their equals for sense, courage, and activity, are not to be found within fifty miles of Strasbourg. Would they were back again! I begin to feel uneasy about them.'

"Marguerite was at this time employed in laying the cloth.

'And are you equally anxious for the return of your sons?' said I to her.

'Not I,' she replied peevishly; 'they are no children of mine.'

'Come, come, Marguerite,' said the husband, 'do not be out of humour with the gentleman for asking a simple question: had you not looked so cross, he would never have thought you old enough to have a son of three-and-twenty; but you see how many years ill-temper adds to you.—Excuse my wife's rudeness, monsieur; a little thing puts her out, and she is somewhat displeased at your not thinking her to be under thirty.—That is the truth, is it not, Marguerite?—You know, monsieur, that age is always a ticklish subject with a woman.—Come, come, Marguerite, clear up a little. If you have not sons as old, you will some twenty years hence; and I hope that we shall live to see them just such lads as Jacques and Robert.'

"Marguerite clasped her hands together passionately.

'God forbid!' said she, 'God forbid!

If I thought it, I would strangle them with my own hands.'

"She quitted the room hastily, and went up stairs.

"I could not help expressing to the woodman how much I pitied him, for being chained for life to a partner of such ill-humour.

'Ah, Lord! monsieur, every one has his share of grievances, and Marguerite has fallen to mine. Besides, after all, she is only cross, and not malicious: the worst is, that her affection for two children by a former husband makes her play the step-mother with my two sons; she cannot bear the sight of them, and by her good will, they would never set a foot within my door. But on this point I always stand firm, and never will consent to abandon the poor lads to the world's mercy, as she has often solicited me to do. In every thing else, I let her have her own way; and truly she manages a family rarely, that I must say for her.'

"We were conversing in this manner, when our discourse was interrupted by a loud halloo, which rang through the forest.

'My sons, I hope!' exclaimed the woodman, and ran to open the door.

"The halloo was repeated. We now distinguished the trampling of horses; and soon after, a carriage attended by several cavaliers stopped at the cottage door. One of the horsemen inquired how far they were still from Strasbourg. As he addressed himself to me, I answered in the number of miles which Claude had told me; upon which a volley of curses was vented against the drivers for having lost their way. The persons in the coach were now informed of the distance of Strasbourg; and also that the horses were so fatigued as to be incapable of proceeding further. A lady, who appeared to be the principal, expressed much chagrin at this intelligence; but as there was no remedy, one of the attendants asked the woodman

whether he could furnish them with lodging for the night.

"He seemed much embarrassed, and replied in the negative; adding, that a Spanish gentleman and his servant were already in possession of the only spare apartments in his house. On hearing this, the gallantry of my nation would not permit me to retain those accommodations of which a female was in want. I instantly signified to the woodman, that I transferred my right to the lady: he made some objections, but I overruled them, and hastening to the carriage, opened the door, and assisted the lady to descend. I immediately recognized her for the same person whom I had seen at the inn at Luneville. I took an opportunity of asking one of her attendants what was her name?

'The baroness Lindenberg,' was the answer.

"I could not but remark how different a reception our host had given these newcomers and myself. His reluctance to ad-

mit them was visibly expressed on his countenance; and he prevailed on himself with difficulty to tell the lady that she was welcome. I conducted her into the house, and placed her in the arm-chair which I had just quitted. She thanked me very graciously, and made a thousand apologies for putting me to an inconvenience. Suddenly the woodman's countenance cleared up.

'At last I have arranged it!' said he, interrupting her excuses. 'I can lodge you and your suite, madam, and you will not be under the necessity of making this gentleman suffer for his politeness. We have two spare chambers, one for the lady, the other, monsieur, for you: my wife shall give up hers to the two waiting-women: as for the men-servants, they must content themselves with passing the night in a large barn, which stands at a few yards' distance from the house; there they shall have a blazing fire, and as good a supper as we can make shift to give them.'

"After several expressions of gratitude on the lady's part, and opposition on mine, to Marguerite's giving up her bed, this arrangement was agreed to. As the room was small, the baroness immediately dismissed her male domestics. Baptiste was on the point of conducting them to the barn which he had mentioned, when two young men appeared at the door of the cottage.

'Hell and furies!' exclaimed the first, starting back, 'Robert, the house is filled with strangers!'

'Ha! there are my sons!' cried our host. 'Why, Jacques! Robert! whither are you running, boys? There is room enough still for you.'

"Upon this assurance the youths returned. The father presented them to the baroness and myself; after which he withdrew with our domestics, while, at the request of the two waiting-women, Marguerite conducted them to the room designed for their mistress.

"The two new-comers were tall, stout, well-made young men, hardfeatured, and very much sunburnt. They paid their compliments to us in few words, and acknowledged Claude, who now entered the room, as an old acquaintance. They then threw aside their cloaks, in which they were wrapped up, took off a leathern belt, to which a large cutlass was suspended, and each drawing a brace of pistols from his girdle, laid them upon a shelf.

'You travel well armed,' said I.

'True, monsieur,' replied Robert. 'We left Strasbourg late this evening, and 'tis necessary to take precautions at passing through this forest after dark: it does not bear a good repute, I promise you.'

'How!' said the baroness, 'are there robbers hereabout?'

'So it is said, madam: for my own part, I have travelled through the wood at all hours, and never met with one of them.'

"Here Marguerite returned. Her

stepsons drew her to the other end of the room, and whispered her for some minutes. By the looks which they cast towards us at intervals, I conjectured them to be inquiring our business in the cottage.

"In the meanwhile, the baroness expressed her apprehension that her husband would be suffering much anxiety upon her account. She had intended to send on one of her servants to inform the baron of her delay; but the account which the young men gave of the forest rendered this plan impracticable. Claude relieved her from her embarrassment: he informed her that he was under the necessity of reaching Strasbourg that night; and that, would she trust him with a letter, she might depend upon its being safely delivered.

'And how comes it,' said I, 'that you are under no apprehension of meeting these robbers?'

'Alas, monsieur! a poor man with a

large family must not lose certain profit because 'tis attended with a little danger; and perhaps my lord the baron may give me a trifle for my pains: besides, I have nothing to lose except my life; and that will not be worth the robbers' taking.'

"I thought his arguments bad, and advised his waiting till the morning; but as the baroness did not second me, I was obliged to give up the point. The baroness Lindenberg, as I found afterwards, had long been accustomed to sacrifice the interests of others to her own, and her wish to send Claude to Strasbourg blinded her to the danger of the undertaking. Accordingly it was resolved that he should set out without delay. The baroness wrote her letter to her husband; and I sent a few lines to my banker, apprising him that I should not be at Strasbourg till the next day. Claude took our letters, and left the cottage.

"The lady declared herself much fatigued by her journey: besides having

come from some distance, the drivers had contrived to lose their way in the forest. She now addressed herself to Marguerite, desiring to be shewn to her chamber, and permitted to take half-an-hour's repose. One of the waiting-women was immediately summoned; she appeared with a light, and the baroness followed her up stairs. The cloth was spreading in the chamber where I was, and Marguerite soon gave me to understand that I was in her way. Her hints were too broad to be easily mistaken; I therefore desired one of the young men to conduct me to the chamber where I was to sleep, and where I could remain till supper was ready.

'Which chamber is it, mother?' said Robert.

'The one with green hangings,' she replied. 'I have just been at the trouble of getting it ready, and have put fresh sheets upon the bed: if the gentleman chooses to lollop and lounge upon it, he may make it again himself for me.'

'You are out of humour, mother—but that is no novelty.—Have the goodness to follow me, monsieur.'

"He opened the door, and advanced towards a narrow staircase.

'You have got no light,' said Marguerite; 'is it your own neck, or the gentleman's, that you have a mind to break?'

"She crossed by me, and put a candle into Robert's hand; having received which he began to ascend the staircase. Jacques was employed in laying the cloth, and his back was turned towards me. Marguerite seized the moment when we were unobserved: she caught my hand, and pressed it strongly.—'Look at the sheets!' said she, as she passed me, and immediately resumed her former occupation.

"Startled by the abruptness of her action, I remained as if petrified. Robert's voice, desiring me to follow him, recalled me to myself. I ascended the staircase. My conductor ushered me into a chamber, where an excellent wood fire was

blazing upon the hearth. He placed the light upon the table, inquired whether I had any further commands; and, on my replying in the negative, left me to myself. You may be certain that the moment when I found myself alone was that on which I complied with Marguerite's injunction.—I took the candle, hastily approached the bed, and turned down the coverture. What was my astonishment, my horror, at finding the sheets crimsoned with blood!

"At that moment a thousand confused ideas passed before my imagination. The robbers who infested the wood—Marguerite's exclamation respecting her children—the arms and appearance of the two young men—and the various anecdotes which I had heard related respecting the secret correspondence which frequently exists between banditti and postillions; all these circumstances flashed upon my mind, and inspired me with doubt and apprehension. I ruminated on the most probable

means of ascertaining the truth of my conjectures. Suddenly I was aware of some one below pacing hastily backwards and forwards. Every thing now appeared to me an object of suspicion. With precaution I drew near the window, which, as the room had been long shut up, was left open in spite of the cold. I ventured to look out. The beams of the moon permitted me to distinguish a man, whom I had no difficulty to recognize for my host. I watched his movements. He walked swiftly, then stopped and seemed to listen: he stamped upon the ground, and beat his stomach with his arms, as if to guard himself from the inclemency of the season: at the least noise—if a voice was heard in the lower part of the house—if a bat flitted past him, or the wind rattled amidst the leafless boughs, he started, and looked round with anxiety.

'Plague take him!' said he, at length, with extreme impatience; 'what can he be about?'

"He spoke in a low voice; but as he was just below my window, I had no difficulty to distinguish his words.

"I now heard the steps of one approaching. Baptiste went towards the sound; he joined a man, whom his low stature and the horn suspended from his neck declared to be no other than my faithful Claude, whom I had supposed to be already on his way to Strasbourg. Expecting their discourse to throw some light upon my situation, I hastened to put myself in a condition to hear it with safety. For this purpose I extinguished the candle, which stood upon a table near the bed: the flame of the fire was not strong enough to betray me, and I immediately resumed my place at the window.

"The objects of my curiosity had stationed themselves directly under it. I suppose that, during my momentary absence, the woodman had been blaming Claude for tardiness, since, when I return-

ed to the window, the latter was endeavouring to excuse his fault.

'However,' added he, 'my diligence at present shall make up for my past delay.'

'On that condition,' answered Baptiste, 'I shall readily forgive you: but in truth, as you share equally with us in our prizes, your own interest will make you use all possible diligence. 'Twould be a shame to let such a noble booty escape us. You say that this Spaniard is rich?'

'His servant boasted at the inn that the effects in his chaise were worth above two thousand pistoles.'

"Oh, how I cursed Stephano's imprudent vanity!

'And I have been told,' continued the postillion, 'that this baroness carries about her a casket of jewels, of immense value.'

'May be so; but I had rather she had staid away. The Spaniard was a secure prey—the boys and myself could easily have mastered him and his servant, and then the two thousand pistoles would have

been shared between us four. Now we must let in the band for a share, and perhaps the whole covey may escape us. Should our friends have betaken themselves to their different posts before you reach the cavern, all will be lost: the lady's attendants are too numerous for us to overpower them. Unless our associates arrive in time, we must needs let these travellers set out to-morrow, without damage or hurt.'

'Tis plaguy unlucky that my comrades who drove the coach should be those unacquainted with our confederacy!—But never fear, friend Baptiste—an hour will bring me to the cavern: it is now but ten o'clock, and by twelve you may expect the arrival of the band. By the bye, take care of your wife: you know how strong is her repugnance to our mode of life; and she may find means to give information to the lady's servants of our design.'

'Oh, I am secure of her silence; she is too much afraid of me, and fond of her

children, to dare to betray my secret. Besides, Jacques and Robert keep a strict eye over her, and she is not permitted to set a foot out of the cottage. The servants are safely lodged in the barn. I shall endeavour to keep all quiet till the arrival of our friends. Were I assured of your finding them, the strangers should be dispatched this instant; but as it is possible for you to miss the banditti, I am fearful of being summoned by their domestics to produce them in the morning.'

'And suppose either of the travellers should discover your design?'

'Then we must poniard those in our power, and take our chance about mastering the rest. However, to avoid running such a risk, hasten to the cavern; the banditti never leave it before eleven—and if you use diligence, you may reach it in time to stop them.'

'Tell Robert that I have taken his horse; my own has broken his bridle, and

escaped into the wood. What is the watch-word?'

'The reward of courage.'

'Tis sufficient.—I hasten to the cavern.'

'And I to rejoin my guests, lest my absence should create suspicion. Farewell, and be diligent.'

"These worthy associates now separated; the one bent his course towards the stable, while the other returned to the house.

"You may judge what must have been my feelings during the conversation, of which I lost not a single syllable. I dared not trust myself to my reflections, nor did any means present itself to escape the dangers which threatened me. Resistance I knew to be vain: I was unarmed, and a single man against three. However, I resolved at least to sell my life as dearly as I could. Dreading lest Baptiste should perceive my absence, and suspect me to

have overheard the message with which Claude was dispatched, I hastily relighted my candle, and quitted the chamber. On descending, I found the table spread for six persons. The baroness sat by the fireside; Marguerite was employed in dressing a sallad, and her stepsons were whispering together at the further end of the room. Baptiste having the round of the garden to make ere he could reach the cottage door, was not yet arrived. I seated myself quietly opposite to the baroness.

"A glance upon Marguerite told her that her hint had not been thrown away upon me. How different did she now appear to me! What before seemed gloom and sullenness, I now found to be disgust at her associates, and compassion for my danger. I looked up to her as to my only resource; yet knowing her to be watched by her husband with a suspicious eye, I could place but little reliance on the exertions of her good will.

"In spite of all my endeavours to con-

ceal it, my agitation was but too visibly expressed upon my countenance. I was pale, and both my words and actions were disordered and embarrassed. The young men observed this, and inquired the cause. I attributed it to excess of fatigue, and the violent effect produced on me by the severity of the season. Whether they believed me or not, I will not pretend to say; they at least ceased to embarrass me with their questions. I strove to divert my attention from the perils which surrounded me, by conversing on different subjects with the baroness. I talked of Germany, declaring my intention of visiting it immediately—God knows that I little thought at that moment of ever seeing it! She replied to me with great ease and politeness; professed that the pleasure of making my acquaintance amply compensated for the delay in her journey, and gave me a pressing invitation to make some stay at the castle of Lindenberg. As she spoke thus, the youths exchanged

a malicious smile, which declared that she would be fortunate if she ever reached that castle herself. This action did not escape me; but I concealed the emotion which it excited in my breast. I continued to converse with the lady; but my discourse was so frequently incoherent, that, as she has since informed me, she began to doubt whether I was in my right senses. The fact was, that while my conversation turned upon one subject, my thoughts were entirely occupied by another. I meditated upon the means of quitting the cottage, finding my way to the barn, and giving the domestics information of our host's designs. I was soon convinced how impracticable was the attempt. Jacques and Robert watched my every movement with an attentive eye, and I was obliged to abandon the idea. All my hopes now rested upon Claude's not finding the banditti: in that case, according to what I had overheard, we should be permitted to depart unhurt.

"I shuddered involuntarily as Baptiste entered the room. He made many apologies for his long absence, but 'he had been detained by affairs impossible to be delayed.' He then entreated permission for his family to sup at the same table with us, without which, respect would not authorize his taking such a liberty. Oh how in my heart I cursed the hypocrite! how I loathed his presence, who was on the point of depriving me of an existence at that time infinitely dear! I had every reason to be satisfied with life; I had youth, wealth, rank, and education, and the fairest prospects presented themselves before me. I saw those prospects on the point of closing in the most horrible manner: yet was I obliged to dissimulate, and to receive, with a semblance of gratitude, the false civilities of him who held the dagger to my bosom.

"The permission which our host demanded was easily obtained. We seated ourselves at the table. The baroness and myself occupied one side; the sons were

opposite to us, with their backs to the door. Baptiste took his seat by the baroness, at the upper end; and the place next to him was left for his wife. She soon entered the room, and placed before us a plain but comfortable peasant's repast. Our host thought it necessary to apologize for the poorness of the supper: 'he had not been apprized of our coming; he could only offer us such fare as had been intended for his own family.'

'But,' added he, 'should any accident detain my noble guests longer than they at present intend, I hope to give them a better treatment.'

"The villain! I well knew the accident to which he alluded. I shuddered at the treatment which he taught us to expect.

"My companion in danger seemed entirely to have got rid of her chagrin at being delayed. She laughed, and conversed with the family with infinite gaiety. I strove, but in vain, to follow her example:

My spirits were evidently forced, and the constraint which I put upon myself escaped not Baptiste's observation.

'Come, come, monsieur, cheer up!' said he; 'you seem not quite recovered from your fatigue. To raise your spirits, what say you to a glass of excellent old wine, which was left me by my father? God rest his soul! he is in a better world. I seldom produce this wine; but as I am not honoured with such guests every day, this is an occasion which deserves a bottle.'

"He then gave his wife a key, and instructed her where to find the wine of which he spoke. She seemed by no means pleased with the commission; she took the key with an embarrassed air, and hesitated to quit the table.

'Did you hear me?' said Baptiste, in an angry tone.

"Marguerite darted upon him a look of mingled anger and fear, and left the chamber. His eyes followed her suspiciously, till she had closed the door.

"She soon returned, with a bottle sealed with yellow wax. She placed it upon the table, and gave the key back to her husband. I suspected that this liquor was not presented to us without design, and I watched Marguerite's movements with inquietude. She was employed in rinsing some small horn goblets. As she placed them before Baptiste, she saw that my eye was fixed upon her; and at the moment when she thought herself unobserved by the banditti, she motioned to me with her head not to taste the liquor. She then resumed her place.

"In the meanwhile our host had drawn the cork, and filling two of the goblets, offered them to the lady and myself. She at first made some objections; but the instances of Baptiste were so urgent, that she was obliged to comply. Fearing to excite suspicion, I hesitated not to take the goblet presented to me. By its smell and colour, I guessed it to be champaign; but some grains of powder floating upon

the top convinced me that it was not unadulterated. However, I dared not to express my repugnance to drinking it; I lifted it to my lips, and seemed to be swallowing it: suddenly starting from my chair, I made the best of my way towards a vase of water at some distance, in which Marguerite had been rinsing the goblets. I pretended to spit out the wine with disgust, and took an opportunity, unperceived, of emptying the liquor into the vase.

"The banditti seemed alarmed at my action. Jacques half rose from his chair, put his hand into his bosom, and I discovered the haft of a dagger. I returned to my seat with tranquillity, and affected not to have observed their confusion.

'You have not suited my taste, honest friend,' said I, addressing myself to Baptiste; 'I never can drink champaign without its producing a violent illness. I swallowed a few mouthfuls ere I was aware of its quality, and fear that I shall suffer for my imprudence.'

"Baptiste and Jacques exchanged looks of distrust.

'Perhaps,' said Robert, 'the smell may be disagreeable to you?'

"He quitted his chair, and removed the goblet. I observed that he examined whether it was nearly empty.

'He must have drank sufficient,' said he to his brother, in a low voice, while he reseated himself.

"Marguerite looked apprehensive that I had tasted the liquor. A glance from my eye re-assured her.

"I waited with anxiety for the effects which the beverage would produce upon the lady. I doubted not but the grains which I had observed were poisonous, and lamented that it had been impossible for me to warn her of the danger. But a few minutes had elapsed, before I perceived her eyes grow heavy; her head sunk upon her shoulder, and she fell into a deep sleep. I affected not to attend to this circum-

stance, and continued my conversation with Baptiste, with all the outward gaiety in my power to assume: but he no longer answered me without constraint; he eyed me with distrust and astonishment; and I saw that the banditti were frequently whispering among themselves. My situation became every moment more painful: I sustained the character of confidence with a worse grace than ever. Equally afraid of the arrival of their accomplices, and of their suspecting my knowledge of their designs, I knew not how to dissipate the distrust which the banditti evidently entertained for me. In this new dilemma the friendly Marguerite again assisted me. She passed behind the chairs of her stepsons, stopped for a moment opposite to me, closed her eyes, and reclined her head upon her shoulder. This hint immediately dispelled my incertitude —it told me that I ought to imitate the baroness, and pretend that the liquor had

taken its full effect upon me. I did so, and in a few minutes seemed perfectly overcome with slumber.

'So!' cried Baptiste, as I fell back in my chair, 'at last he sleeps! I began to think that he had scented our design, and that we should have been forced to dispatch him at all events.'

'And why not dispatch him at all events?' inquired the ferocious Jacques. 'Why leave him the possibility of betraying our secret? Marguerite, give me one of my pistols—a single touch of the trigger will finish him at once.'

'And supposing,' rejoined the father, 'supposing that our friends should not arrive to-night, a pretty figure we should make when the servants inquire for him in the morning! No, no, Jacques; we must wait for our associates: if they join us, we are strong enough to dispatch the domestics as well as their masters, and the booty is our own. If Claude does not find the troop, we must take patience, and

suffer the prey to slip through our fingers. Ah, boys, boys! had you arrived but five minutes sooner, the Spaniard would have been done for, and two thousand pistoles our own. But you are always out of the way when you are most wanted. You are the most unlucky rogues——'

'Well, well, father,' answered Jacques, 'had you been of my mind, all would have been over by this time. You, Robert, Claude, and myself—why, the strangers were but double the number; and, I warrant you, we might have mastered them. However, Claude is gone; 'tis too late to think of it now. We must wait patiently for the arrival of the gang; and if the travellers escape us to-night, we must take care to way-lay them to-morrow.'

'True, true!' said Baptiste.—'Marguerite, have you given the sleeping draught to the waiting-women?'

"She replied in the affirmative.

'All then is safe. Come, come, boys;

whatever falls out, we have no reason to complain of this adventure. We run no danger, may gain much, and can lose nothing.'

"At this moment I heard a trampling of horses. Oh, how dreadful was the sound to my ears! A cold sweat flowed down my forehead, and I felt all the terrors of impending death. I was by no means reassured by hearing the compassionate Marguerite exclaim, in the accents of despair—

'Almighty God! they are lost!'

"Luckily the woodman and his sons were too much occupied by the arrival of their associates to attend to me, or the violence of my agitation would have convinced them that my sleep was feigned.

'Open! open!' exclaimed several voices on the outside of the cottage.

'Yes, yes!' cried Baptiste, joyfully; 'they are our friends, sure enough. Now, then, our booty is certain. Away! lads, away! lead them to the barn; you know what is to be done there.'

" Robert hastened to open the door of the cottage.

'But first,' said Jacques, taking up his arms, 'first let me dispatch these sleepers.'

'No, no, no!' replied his father: 'go you to the barn, where your presence is wanted. Leave me to take care of these and the women above.'

" Jacques obeyed, and followed his brother. They seemed to converse with the new-comers for a few minutes; after which I heard the robbers dismount, and, as I conjectured, bend their course towards the barn.

'So! that is wisely done!' muttered Baptiste; 'they have quitted their horses, that they may fall upon the strangers by surprise. Good! good! and now to business.'

" I heard him approach a small cupboard which was fixed up in a distant part of the room, and unlock it. At this moment I felt myself shaken gently.

'Now! now!' whispered Marguerite.

"I opened my eyes. Baptiste stood with his back towards me. No one else was in the room, save Marguerite and the sleeping lady. The villain had taken a dagger from the cupboard, and seemed examining whether it was sufficiently sharp. I had neglected to furnish myself with arms; but I perceived this to be my only chance of escaping, and resolved not to lose the opportunity. I sprang from my seat, darted suddenly upon Baptiste, and clasping my hands round his throat, pressed it so forcibly as to prevent his uttering a single cry. You may remember, that I was remarkable at Salamanca for the power of my arm. It now rendered me an essential service. Surprised, terrified, and breathless, the villain was by no means an equal antagonist. I threw him upon the ground; I grasped him still tighter, and while I fixed him without motion upon the floor, Marguerite, wresting the dagger from his hand, plunged it repeatedly in his heart till he expired.

"No sooner was this horrible but necessary act perpetrated, than Marguerite called on me to follow her.

'Flight is our only refuge,' said she; 'quick! quick! away!'

"I hesitated not to obey her; but unwilling to leave the baroness a victim to the vengeance of the robbers, I raised her in my arms still sleeping, and hastened after Marguerite. The horses of the banditti were fastened near the door. My conductress sprang upon one of them: I followed her example, placed the baroness before me, and spurred on my horse. Our only hope was to reach Strasbourg, which was much nearer than the perfidious Claude had assured me. Marguerite was well acquainted with the road, and galloped on before me. We were obliged to pass by the barn, where the robbers were slaughtering our domestics. The door was open: we distinguished the shrieks of the dying, and imprecations of the

murderers.—What I felt at that moment, language is unable to describe.

"Jacques heard the trampling of our horses, as we rushed by the barn. He flew to the door with a burning torch in his hand, and easily recognized the fugitives.

'Betrayed! betrayed!' he shouted to his companions.

"Instantly they left their bloody work, and hastened to regain their horses. We heard no more. I buried my spurs in the sides of my courser, and Marguerite goaded on hers with the poniard which had already rendered us such good service. We flew like lightning, and gained the open plains. Already was Strasbourg's steeple in sight, when we heard the robbers pursuing us. Marguerite looked back, and distinguished our followers descending a small hill at no great distance. It was in vain that we urged on our horses: the noise approached nearer with every moment.

'We are lost!' she exclaimed; 'the villains gain upon us!'

'On, on!' replied I; 'I hear the tramp ling of horses coming from the town.'

"We redoubled our exertions, and were soon aware of a numerous band of cavaliers, who came towards us at full speed. They were on the point of passing us.

'Stay, stay!' shrieked Marguerite; 'save us! for God's sake save us!'

"The foremost, who seemed to act as guide, immediately reined in his steed.

''Tis she, 'tis she!' exclaimed he, springing upon the ground. 'Stop, my lord! stop! they are safe; 'tis my mother.'

"At the same moment, Marguerite threw herself from her horse, clasped him in her arms, and covered him with kisses. The other cavaliers stopped at the exclamation.

'The baroness Lindenberg!' cried another of the strangers eagerly—'where is she? Is she not with you?'

"He stopped, on beholding her lying senseless in my arms. Hastily he caught her from me. The profound sleep in which she was plunged made him at first tremble for her life; but the beating of her heart soon reassured him.

'God be thanked!' said he; 'she has escaped unhurt.'

"I interrupted his joy by pointing out the brigands, who continued to approach. No sooner had I mentioned them, than the greatest part of the company, which appeared to be chiefly composed of soldiers, hastened forward to meet them. The villains staid not to receive their attack. Perceiving their danger, they turned the heads of their horses, and fled into the wood, whither they were followed by our preservers. In the meanwhile the stranger, whom I guessed to be the baron Lindenberg, after thanking me for my care of his lady, proposed our returning with all speed to the town. The baroness, on whom the effects of the opi-

ate had not ceased to operate, was placed before him; Marguerite and her son remounted their horses; the baron's domestics followed, and we soon arrived at the inn where he had taken his apartments.

"This was at the Austrian Eagle, where my banker, whom before my quitting Paris I had apprized of my intention to visit Strasbourg, had prepared lodgings for me. I rejoiced at this circumstance: it gave me an opportunity of cultivating the baron's acquaintance, which I foresaw would be of use to me in Germany. Immediately upon our arrival, the lady was conveyed to bed. A physician was sent for, who prescribed a medicine likely to counteract the effects of the sleepy potion; and after it had been poured down her throat, she was committed to the care of the hostess. The baron then addressed himself to me, and entreated me to recount the particulars of this adventure. I complied with his request instantaneously; for, in pain respecting Stephano's fate,

whom I had been compelled to abandon to the cruelty of the banditti, I found it impossible for me to repose till I had some news of him. I received but too soon the intelligence that my trusty servant had perished. The soldiers who had pursued the brigands returned while I was employed in relating my adventure to the baron. By their account, I found that the robbers had been overtaken. Guilt and true courage are incompatible: they had thrown themselves at the feet of their pursuers, had surrendered themselves without striking a blow, had discovered their secret retreat, made known their signals, by which the rest of the gang might be seized, and, in short, had betrayed every mark of cowardice and baseness. By this means the whole of the band, consisting of near sixty persons, had been made prisoners, bound, and conducted to Strasbourg. Some of the soldiers hastened to the cottage, one of the banditti serving them as guide. Their first visit was to the fatal

barn, where they were fortunate enough to find two of the baron's servants still alive, though desperately wounded. The rest had expired beneath the swords of the robbers; and of these my unhappy Stephano was one.

"Alarmed at our escape, the robbers, in their haste to overtake us, had neglected to visit the cottage; in consequence, the soldiers found the two waiting-women unhurt, and buried in the same deathlike slumber which had overpowered their mistress. There was nobody else found in the cottage, except a child, not above four years old, which the soldiers brought away with them. We were busying ourselves with conjectures respecting the birth of this little unfortunate, when Marguerite rushed into the room with the baby in her arms. She fell at the feet of the officer who was making us this report, and blessed him a thousand times for the preservation of her child.

"When the first burst of maternal ten-

derness was over, I besought her to declare by what means she had been united to a man whose principles seemed so totally discordant with her own. She bent her eyes downwards, and wiped a few tears from her cheek.

'Gentlemen,' said she, after a silence of some minutes, 'I would request a favour of you. You have a right to know on whom you confer an obligation; I will not, therefore, stifle a confession which covers me with shame; but permit me to comprise it in as few words as possible.

'I was born in Strasbourg, of respectable parents; their names I must at present conceal—my father still lives, and deserves not to be involved in my infamy. If you grant my request, you shall be informed of my family name. A villain made himself master of my affections, and to follow him I quitted my father's house. Yet, though my passions overpowered my virtue, I sunk not into that degeneracy of vice but too commonly the lot of women

who make the first false step. I loved my seducer, dearly loved him! I was true to his bed: this baby, and the youth who warned you, my lord baron, of your lady's danger, are the pledges of our affection. Even at this moment I lament his loss, though 'tis to him that I owe all the miseries of my existence.

'He was of noble birth, but he had squandered away his paternal inheritance. His relations considered him as a disgrace to their name, and utterly discarded him. His excesses drew upon him the indignation of the police. He was obliged to fly from Strasbourg, and saw no other resource from beggary than an union with the banditti who infested the neighbouring forest, and whose troop was chiefly composed of young men of family in the same predicament with himself. I was determined not to forsake him. I followed him to the cavern of the brigands, and shared with him the misery inseparable from a life of pillage.—But, though I was

aware that our existence was supported by plunder, I knew not all the horrible circumstances attached to my lover's profession; these he concealed from me with the utmost care. He was conscious that my sentiments were not sufficiently depraved to look without horror upon assassination. He supposed, and with justice, that I should fly with detestation from the embraces of a murderer. Eight years of possession had not abated his love for me; and he cautiously removed from my knowledge every circumstance which might lead me to suspect the crimes in which he but too often participated. He succeeded perfectly. It was not till after my seducer's death, that I discovered his hands to have been stained with the blood of innocence.

'One fatal night he was brought back to the cavern, covered with wounds: he received them in attacking an English traveller, whom his companions immedi-

ately sacrificed to their resentment. He had only time to entreat my pardon for all the sorrows which he had caused me: he pressed my hand to his lips, and expired. My grief was inexpressible. As soon as its violence abated, I resolved to return to Strasbourg, to throw myself, with my two children, at my father's feet, and implore his forgiveness, though I little hoped to obtain it. What was my consternation, when informed that no one entrusted with the secret of their retreat was ever permitted to quit the troop of the banditti—that I must give up all hopes of ever rejoining society, and consent instantly to accept one of their band for my husband! My prayers and remonstrances were vain. They cast lots to decide to whose possession I should fall: I became the property of the infamous Baptiste. A robber, who had once been a monk, pronounced over us a burlesque rather than a religious ceremony: I and my children

were delivered into the hands of my new husband, and he conveyed us immediately to his home.

'He assured me that he had long entertained for me the most ardent regard, but that friendship for my deceased lover had obliged him to stifle his desires. He endeavoured to reconcile me to my fate, and for some time treated me with respect and gentleness. At length, finding that my aversion rather increased than diminished, he obtained those favours by violence which I persisted to refuse him. No resource remained for me but to bear my sorrows with patience; I was conscious that I deserved them but too well. Flight was forbidden: my children were in the power of Baptiste; and he had sworn, that if I attempted to escape, their lives should pay for it. I had had too many opportunities of witnessing the barbarity of his nature, to doubt his fulfilling his oath to the very letter. Sad experience had convinced me of the horrors of my situation. My first

lover had carefully concealed them from me; Baptiste rather rejoiced in opening my eyes to the cruelties of his profession, and strove to familiarize me with blood and slaughter.

'My nature was licentious and warm, but not cruel: my conduct had been imprudent, but my heart was not unprincipled. Judge then what I must have felt at being a continual witness of crimes the most horrible and revolting! Judge how I must have grieved at being united to a man who received the unsuspecting guest with an air of openness and hospitality, at the very moment that he meditated his destruction! Chagrin and discontent preyed upon my constitution; the few charms bestowed on me by nature withered away, and the dejection of my countenance denoted the sufferings of my heart. I was tempted a thousand times to put an end to my existence; but the remembrance of my children held my hand. I trembled to leave my dear boys in my tyrant's power,

and trembled yet more for their virtue than their lives. The second was still too young to benefit by my instructions; but in the heart of my eldest I laboured unceasingly to plant those principles which might enable him to avoid the crimes of his parents. He listened to me with docility, or rather with eagerness: even at his early age, he shewed that he was not calculated for the society of villains; and the only comfort which I enjoyed among my sorrows, was to witness the dawning virtues of my Theodore.

'Such was my situation when the perfidy of don Alphonso's postillion conducted him to the cottage. His youth, air, and manners, interested me most forcibly in his behalf. The absence of my husband's sons gave me an opportunity which I had long wished to find; and I resolved to risk every thing to preserve the stranger. The vigilance of Baptiste prevented me from warning don Alphonso of his danger. I knew that my betraying the

secret would be immediately punished with death; and however embittered was my life by calamities, I wanted courage to sacrifice it for the sake of preserving that of another person. My only hope rested upon procuring succour from Strasbourg. At this I resolved to try; and, should an opportunity offer of warning don Alphonso of his danger unobserved, I was determined to seize it with avidty. By Baptiste's orders I went up stairs to make the stranger's bed: I spread upon it sheets in which a traveller had been murdered but a few nights before, and which still were stained with blood. I hoped that these marks would not escape the vigilance of our guest, and that he would collect from them the designs of my perfidious husband. Neither was this the only step which I took to preserve the stranger: Theodore was confined to his bed by illness. I stole into his room unobserved by my tyrant, communicated to him my project, and he entered into it

with eagerness. He rose in spite of his malady, and dressed himself with all speed. I fastened one of the sheets round his arms, and lowered him from the window. He flew to the stable, took Claude's horse, and hastened to Strasbourg. Had he been accosted by the banditti, he was to have declared himself sent upon a message by Baptiste, but fortunately he reached the town without meeting any obstacle. Immediately upon his arrival at Strasbourg, he entreated assistance from the magistrate: his story passed from mouth to mouth, and at length came to the knowledge of my lord the baron. Anxious for the safety of his lady, who he knew would be upon the road that evening, it struck him that she might have fallen into the power of the robbers. He accompanied Theodore, who guided the soldiers towards the cottage, and arrived just in time to save us from falling once more into the hands of our enemies.'

'Here I interrupted Marguerite, to in-

quire why the sleepy potion had been presented to me?—She said, that Baptiste supposed me to have arms about me, and wished to incapacitate me from making resistance: it was a precaution which he always took; since, as the travellers had no hopes of escaping, despair would have incited them to sell their lives dearly.

"The baron then desired Marguerite to inform him what were her present plans. I joined him in declaring my readiness to shew my gratitude to her, for the preservation of my life.

'Disgusted with a world,' she replied, 'in which I have met with nothing but misfortunes, my only wish is to retire into a convent. But first I must provide for my children. I find that my mother is no more—probably driven to an untimely grave by my desertion. My father is still living: he is not a hard man. Perhaps, gentlemen, in spite of my ingratitude and imprudence, your intercessions may induce him to forgive me, and to take charge

of his unfortunate grandsons. If you obtain this boon for me, you will repay my services a thousand fold.'

"Both the baron and myself assured Marguerite that we would spare no pains to obtain her pardon: and that, even should her father be inflexible, she need be under no apprehensions respecting the fate of her children. I engaged myself to provide for Theodore, and the baron promised to take the youngest under his protection. The grateful mother thanked us with tears, for what she called generosity, but which in fact was no more than a proper sense of our obligations to her: she then left the room, to put her little boy to bed, whom fatigue and sleep had completely overpowered.

"The baroness, on recovering, and being informed from what dangers I had rescued her, set no bounds to the expressions of her gratitude: she was joined so warmly by her husband in pressing me to accompany them to their castle in Bavaria, that I

found it impossible to resist their entreaties. During a week which we passed at Strasbourg, the interests of Marguerite were not forgotten. In our application to her father, we succeeded as amply as we could wish. The good old man had lost his wife: he had no children but this unfortunate daughter, of whom he had received no news for almost fourteen years. He was surrounded by distant relations, who waited with impatience for his decease, in order to get possession of his money. When, therefore, Marguerite appeared again so unexpectedly, he considered her as a gift from Heaven; he received her and her children with open arms, and insisted upon their establishing themselves in his house without delay. The disappointed cousins were obliged to give place. The old man would not hear of his daughter's retiring into a convent: he said, that she was too necessary to his happiness, and she was easily persuaded to relinquish her designs. But no persuasions

could induce Theodore to give up the plan which I had at first marked out for him. He had attached himself to me most sincerely during my stay at Strasbourg; and when I was on the point of leaving it, he besought me with tears to take him into my service. He set forth all his little talents in the most favourable colours, and tried to convince me that I should find him of infinite use to me upon the road. I was unwilling to charge myself with a lad scarcely turned of thirteen, who I knew could only be a burthen to me: however I could not resist the entreaties of this affectionate youth, who in fact possessed a thousand estimable qualities. With some difficulty he persuaded his relations to let him follow me; and that permission once obtained, he was dubbed with the title of my page. Having passed a week at Strasbourg, Theodore and myself set out for Bavaria, in company with the baron and his lady. These latter, as well as myself, had forced Margue-

rite to accept several presents of value, both for herself and her youngest son. On leaving her, I promised his mother faithfully, that I would restore Theodore to her within the year.

"I have related this adventure at length, Lorenzo, that you might understand the means by which 'the adventurer Alphonso d'Alvarada got introduced into the castle of Lindenberg.' Judge from this specimen, how much faith should be given to your aunt's assertion.

END OF VOL. I.